





Christmas 1943

To David  
From Janet with love.



**A HIGHLAND CHAPBOOK**



A  
HIGHLAND  
CHAPBOOK

BY  
ISABEL CAMERON

Author of  
"The Doctor," "More About the Doctor," "Gorry."

ENEAS MACKAY  
STIRLING



*First published in 1928*

*Printed in Scotland*



*Gratefully Dedicated to*

*SIR ROBERT BRUCE, LL.D.,*

*without whose sympathetic encouragement these  
Sketches would never have been written.*

*I. C.*



## Acknowledgments.

*Some of the articles here printed have already appeared in the "Glasgow Herald," the "Aberdeen Press and Journal," and the writer acknowledges with gratitude the Editors' permission to include these in the "Highland Chapbook."*



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## PREFACE

“WHAT is a chapbook?” one asks. The dictionary says a chapbook is a book sold by a chapman, and gives the etymology of “chap” as “cheap.” This explanation, one feels, puts a chapbook in a somewhat unfavourable light, for “cheap” and “nasty” are adjectives we are apt to bracket together.

The chapbook was really the forerunner of our present-day popular literature. It made no attempt at literary style; it did not strive to elevate or instruct; but it told of homely, amusing things, in which the poorer classes were interested. In many cases it took the place of the ballad in diffusing the romance interest which is always the deepest interest of the folk.

The reason for writing the present little chapbook was to popularise the literature and folklore of the Highlands. These have a special claim upon our affections, for they are peculiarly and wholly ours. Their value lies in their individuality, which is native to the soil, and owes nothing to outside influences. They are dreams and illusions of our own forefolk, and precious to us on that very account. We are proud of the heroes of our race who were ever ready to espouse a lost cause, a forlorn hope; we remember with gratitude the





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achievements of our covenanting ancestors; let us be equally proud of the rich heritage of their thoughts.

Folk literature, one has said, is less valuable than written, an opinion with which we cannot agree. Folk literature goes deeper: from it has been evolved our written works. One has only to think of our ballads, those "fatherless bairns of literature," to recall our debt to the past, when Celtic memory kept alive our noblest poems and stories. Who can deny the literary value of "The Wife of Usher's Well?" What literature would not be proud to have produced "Clerk Saunders?"

The Golden Age of any land has always for us an irresistible fascination. Shall we not yield to the allure of our own land, our hearts' best affections? Heirs are we of the traditions of a great race—warriors, saints, and seers—and the greatest of these are the seers who have left us their imperishable vision.

ISABEL CAMERON.

## THE CHAPBOOK MAN.

DOUGLAS GRAHAM, PIONEER OF CHEAP LITERATURE

**D**OUGAL GRAHAM, who was the pioneer of the cheap literature movement in Scotland, was born in Stirling in 1724. Some writers say he was lame, others that he was hunch-backed. In any case, he was handicapped physically when he tried to earn his living as a farm labourer in Campsie. He became a pedlar, a printer, and a journalist all by turns. He went to Glasgow from Campsie, and in the Saltmarket he learned to be a printer. Soon after we find him setting up his own press, and taking work as a jobbing printer, in what was afterwards to be his own city. In Dougal's deformed body was the soul of an adventurer. Possibly his birthplace and the historical surroundings of his early years had influenced him, for when Bonnie Prince Charlie set up his standard in Scotland, Dougal left his printing press and joined the Pretender's army. He could not have joined as a regular soldier, so we must presume he was a camp-follower. Neither the army nor the man himself were to know that we of to-day look upon him as a war correspondent in what was to be Scotland's last stand for the Stuarts.

Dougal accompanied the army in all its wanderings, and with his nimble wit, his ability to tell a tale, to sing a song, and to string rhymes together, he must have been a prime favourite. He took copious notes of all that stirring time, for he had an alert mind, and a graphic style of his own. He followed the young Chevalier to England, returned with him to Scotland, and followed him to tragic Culloden, where perished on April 16, 1746, so much that was precious to our land.

We should like to know how Dougal made his way back to Glasgow, but he only tells us of the wanderings of the Prince. We can get an account of these wanderings from other sources, but we cannot get any information as to how the little camp-follower won his way back to the second city of Great Britain. He had already made up his mind what he was to do. With the true journalist's instinct, he saw the country was eager for a correct version of the Pretender's campaign. He had not much time, but by September 29, 1746, he had a history ready with an account of every battle, siege, and skirmish that had taken place in England and Scotland. What a journalistic coup!

He advertised his history in the *Glasgow Courant*, and the advertisement is a delightful example of how, even in those days, it paid to advertise. The printer's name is first mentioned; it is James Duncan, and we have a shrewd suspicion that the press in the "Saltmercat" is no other than



the one owned by Dougal himself before he set forth on his adventures. He gives minute directions as to how to find this shop. "It is in the Saltmercat, the 2nd. shop below Gibson's Wynd," we are told, and "the History is a full account of the late Rebellion in the year 1745 and 1746, beginning with the Pretender's embarking for Scotland." It was written in metre, the price was only fourpence, and it was to be had from any bookseller or packman, from James Duncan or from the author, D. Graham. He then adds modestly, "The like has not been done in Scotland since the days of Sir David Lindsay."

The book was, as he expected, very popular. Chapmen carried it in their packs, hawkers sold it in the streets of Glasgow. The country was anxious to hear the whole story, for society was still reeling with the stirring doings of the past two years. It was, too, a book of the people, and written by one of the people in language all could understand. He uses no paint brush, he described things just as he saw them. The English Army, for instance, were armed with all sorts of uncouth weapons, "old scythes with their rumples even into a tree they had been driven, some had batons of good oak, some had hatchets upon a pole, mischievous weapons, antick and droll."

Rather an ugly light is thrown upon the motives of some of the Pretender's followers. They were keen to plunder London, and when at Derby the orders to retreat were given they were highly

indignant, not, it is to be feared, altogether for the sake of the Prince either. The army was eight days in Glasgow, and, judging from Dougal's account, it must have seemed a very long time, and glad indeed must Glasgow have been to see the Highland host departing.

“Eight days they did in Glasgow rest,  
Until they were all clothed and drest ;  
And though they on the best o't fed,  
The town they under tribute laid.  
Ten thousand sterling made it pay,  
For being of the Georgian way,  
Given in goods and ready cash,  
Or else to stand a plundering lash.”

It is very evident that if they had to leave London unplundered, they made up for it in Glasgow. There is something deliciously humorous in justifying this conduct, too, by saying that it was because Glasgow was of the “Georgian way.”

The war correspondent at Culloden was evidently deeply impressed by the deadly work done by Cumberland's artillery. The Highlanders went “down like grass before the mower ; breaches were made as large and broad as avenues in through a wood.” The bald reality of this description is wonderfully impressive. An avenue in through a wood, but the wood is made of living men, and the breaches are made by dead ones ; feelings are conjured up by this picture which are unforgettable.

The history went through many editions. It is

rather funny to find our stout upholder of those who were not of the "Georgian way" now expressing himself as a warm supporter of the House of Hanover. In spite of the history, Dougal did not seem to make much money, and later on we read that "he hawked ballads about the streets of Glasgow till the magistrates, in recognition of his services, gave him the office of Skellut Bellman." He got £10 per annum, a handsome uniform, as well as the fees of those who employed him, from this appointment.

There were two public bellmen in Glasgow in those days; one was the "Mort" or death bellman, who went about announcing the death, and afterwards the funeral, of the inhabitants; the other bellman's duty was to advertise anything of importance; in fact, he did pretty much what the advertising column of the newspapers do for us to-day.

Dougal got this appointment about 1770, and kept it till he died in 1779. All through his life, however, the production and sale of chapbooks were his pet hobbies. Not only did he sell them, but he wrote a great many. He wrote for the people, and he wrote as one of them, in simple plain speech. The chapbook of Dougal Graham was really the fore runner of our present-day cheap and popular literature. No doubt we of to-day would pronounce judgment against the exceeding broadness of some of the tales told, but

they were at least honestly outspoken. The art of suggesting ugly things rather than naming them was unknown to the chapbook writers of that day. "The Courtship and Wedding of Jocky and Maggy" was the title of Dougal's next most popular tale. It is written in prose, and gives a thoroughly reliable and unadorned picture of lower-class life in the eighteenth century. The couple meet at a fair, and the details of the "coortin'" are related with gusto. Then comes the wedding, with all the arrangements for the feast. The mothers prepare it; "Jocky's mother had killed the black 'boul-horned' ewe, three hens, a cock." There was a great quantity of drink. The couple were married in the church, and the procession home was one continuous drinking of healths. "The piping het haggis" was ready for dinner, and after partaking heartily of it, and of sundry drams, the bridegroom had to be put to bed. Tempers seem to have become frayed, and presently one hot word led to another, and the feast ended in a free fight. It was a "blithesome bridal," the writer tells us, along with several other lurid details which need not be gone into here. It is after reading a book like this one realises what the Church was up against in these days. With broad but kindly and human feeling the writer shows us Jocky on the stool of repentance, and it is plain to be seen that Dougal sides with the delinquent in the trick he plays on the congregation. In fact, throughout all Graham's

writings there is this note of tolerance, kindly, humorous and utterly free from censoriousness.

These were not the days of snappy book titles, and "The Coalman's Courtship of the Creel Wife's Daughter" was the name of another of Graham's stories. He never dealt with abstruse topics; human problems, things relating to love, courtship and marriage were his favourite subjects. In this work he gives us a pawky picture of a "blate" wooer coming to court Kate, the creel wife's daughter. The lady is haughty, the swain at first shy, then impatient, and finally abusive. He departs in a rage, but when he gets home he is in a melancholy state, and implores death to end his sufferings. He orders his mother to bake his "funeral bread" because "I'll die this night or soon the morn." But his wise mother knew that folks rarely die of broken hearts, and again the two mothers put their heads together, and "a marriage was arranged" in the most approved style.

"The History of the Haveral Wives" is a diverting work, full of shrewd sense and pawky humour. Maggy, one of the wives, has much to say on the subject of choosing suitable partners for life. "Never marry a widow's only son," she counsels, "for a' the wifely gates in the world will be in him for want o' a father to teach him manly actions." She advises the young man in search of a wife to choose one that's "weel liket by bairns, and by the bairns' mither."

The quaint little wood-cuts illustrating the

chapbooks are interesting productions. They do not break the Fourth Commandment, for they are like nothing on earth or in the water beneath or in heaven above. Bonnie Prince Charlie wears the most amazingly short kilt and carries a claymore. In another chapbook the same figure is Rob Roy. The clergyman marrying Maggy and Jocky, who looks not unlike an elderly and benevolent sheep, is in turn John Welch, Donald Cargill, Ebenezer Erskine, and Isaac Watts!



## HOARDED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

### SOME INTERESTING HIGHLAND AND LOWLAND FOLK WORDS.

**B**ESIDES the number of place and of personal names which abound, we have in our folk-speech a goodly number of hoarded household words of Gaelic origin. They are the survivors of the time when Gaelic was the common speech of the land.

When one remembers that Margaret, Canmore's Queen, decreed that English should be the language of the royal court in Edinburgh, we can date the first blow to the old language. True, it did not die then, but neither did it go on growing as a living language should. It speaks volumes for the vigour of it that it still lives. It follows, then, that the words which survive in English refer to simple elemental things such as food, drink, water, death, war, games, greetings, and a few which relate to superstition.

Gaelic is the language of the heart and of the home, and as such, people who have not a word of it will use a salutation in the old language because they feel that it expresses more than English. The other day in Elgin Station I heard a returned traveller greeting a waiting friend with: "*Cia*

*mar a tha sibh an diugh?* ” that is, “ How are you to-day ? ” But listening to the ringing tones in which he voiced his greeting, it said far more ! It was the spirit of his forefolk, who had spoken Gaelic, breaking out in the returned wanderer, and expressing itself in “ the sweet sounding language of home.”

A few Sundays ago I heard a Highland minister tell how he had sat entranced while a Jew read to him, in Hebrew, the Psalms of David. “ It reminded me of my own Gaelic,” he said, and there was a world of longing in his tones. Yet, it is wildly possible that to the ordinary mortal there was little similarity between the two ancient tongues. The minister, however, in comparing Hebrew to Gaelic was paying it the highest compliment. Dr. Donald Fraser told at the Missionary Conference, that, listening to the talk of the Africans of Livingstonia, he was always reminded of Gaelic. Then he ended up enthusiastically, “ No language like Gaelic for love-making.” Was it not Ian Maclaren who said there were twelve (or was it twenty) different ways of saying “ darling ? ”

The Gaelic food names we still use are names of common simple fare. “ Dulse,” the short seaweed found growing on rocks at low tide ; “ parten,” the large edible crab, are names which tell us that our ancestors wrested a living from the sea shore. “ Bannock,” a heartsome word, and one which awakens happy memories, is Gaelic (*bonnach*).



"Braxy" is the name of another food stuff, into the particulars of which we should not too closely inquire, though many a brawny man has been raised on bannocks and braxy. A young hen is still an "errack," and one likes to think that that much debated word, "haggis" is of Gaelic origin. It is not of French, as some of the authorities claim, anyway. A pudding made of blood and oatmeal is still called a "marag," and in one of Neil Munro's stories, entitled "War," he gives a gruesome description of a woman making a "marag" for her dying child. She got the blood from the living cow, a dreadful state of matters, and one which had to be resorted to often in times of famine.

The word "whisky," as well as the stuff itself, was coined and brewed by the Celts, and we may as well be frank about it. They called it by the poetic name of "*uisge beatha*," water of life, and when men toasted each other in the old days they clinked their glasses and said, "*slainte*." It is a gesture and a toast still in use. The word means "hail" or "health," and it is bound up with drinking customs. A drinking cup was and is still called a "quaich," and the last drink taken before setting out on a journey was called the "stirrup-cup" or literally the "door-cup," that is, the "*deoch-an-doris*." In passing, might one mention another interesting word which comes to us from "*uisge*," water? It is "phoenix." "Fion," the first syllable, means "white," the same as in

Findhorn (the white river), and " uisc " or " uisge " means " water," so that the Phoenix Park in Dublin gets its name from a well of white or limpid water in its neighbourhood, and not from the fabled bird, the phoenix.

The jar in which the whisky was stored has a Gaelic name, it is " pig " (Gaelic *pige*), and the word " pig " came to be applied to all dishes of a rough sort such as were, and are, still carried by the " pig-man." Sometimes we call the pigman a " caird " if he is not of much consequence, and children in a counting-game speak of " A lord, a laird, a cooper, a caird," and it is supposed to be very bad luck if " caird " is the last word counted out. The word is the Gaelic "*ceard*," and has no connection with card. Gaelic is essentially the language of war. A Gaelic war cry is calculated to strike terror into the heart of the enemy. We still call it the " slogan ; " "*sluaghgairn* " is the somewhat alarming way in which it is spelt.

Though kilt is not a Gaelic word, " plaid " is, so is " sporran," and, oddly enough, " trews," too (*truibhas*). The little knife, a wicked weapon worn in the stocking, was and is the "*sgian dubh* " (the black knife). When a chief died his clansmen raised a " cairn " over him, and the piper played a " coronach." Both of those beautiful words are Gaelic.

Music has ever played an important part in the life of the Highlander, and we have such words as " pibroch," " piper," " coronach," and the won-

derful music arranged for the full pipes called "*piobaireachd*." Many of those tunes were composed at the "sheilings," or summer grazing places. We have sheiling songs, stories, and poems, and are all the richer for them, as they are unusually beautiful and full of Celtic spirit.

"Shinty" (Gaelic, *sinteag*) is still played, and our strong men toss the "caber." In the old days the caber was the trunk of a young tree; nowadays, a pole is often used, but the name is unchanged.

There is one Gaelic word which sees much service, that is "galore." Perhaps it is the most hard-working of all those surviving words. It means "much" or "many" or "plenty." It is said, though I do not give it for a fact, that "akimbo" comes from the Gaelic word "*cam*," crooked, an adjective which prefaces two well-known Highland names, and which causes much mortification to the owners of the same.

"Boddach," an old man, and "cailleach," an old woman, are familiar words, and Mrs. Kennedy Fraser has made the public acquainted with the word "ceilidh," a delightful and expressive word in which peat fires, kind friends, spinning wheels, and music are all wrapped up.

The other night, a friend in bidding us good-night, said "*Oidche mhath*." "Where did you learn that?" we asked, for he came from over the Border. "When I was in France," he replied, "there was a Highland regiment near us, and we

used to hear the men use many Gaelic words." To go to France to get instruction in Gaelic seems wonderful. But all speech is wonderful.

To glance at the proverbs of the Lowlands, we find that "The proverbs of a nation are not only an epitome of its wisdom, but crystallise for us much of its national temperament and popular habit of thought. In no other form perhaps can the national traits be so compactly presented as in these saws and proverbs."

Our traits are set forth in our proverbs in rather a pitiless fashion. Clear-sighted (to the verge of brutality), cynical, shrewd, witty, they are; they deal with human nature in an uncannily intimate fashion, laying bare all its little weaknesses and foibles, and even in their laughter there is a jeering note. Take a handful of proverbs about marriage, for instance :—

He that has a bonnie wife needs mair than twa een.

Marry your son when he will, your daughter when ye can.

Honest men marry soon, wise men never.

Better half-hanged than ill-married.

Every man can guide the ill wife but him that gets her.

An ill wife and a new kindled candle should have their heids hadden doon.

One wonders what old misogynist was responsible for these saws. Were some made by an old bachelor who had been crossed in love? Were some

coined by an unhappily married man? And who is responsible for the sinister proverb: "If the auld wife hadna been in the oven, she wad ne'er ha'e thought o' seeking her dochter there?"

About friendship our proverbs are equally cynical.

Puir folks freens' soon mis-ken them.

He that does ye an ill turn will ne'er forgi'e ye.  
Freens gree best sindry.

He that lends money to a freen' has a double loss.

Freens are like fiddle-strings, they mauna be screwed over ticht.

Our folk proverbs have much to say about gossip:—

Gi'e your tongue mair holidays than yer heid.  
Ye're best when ye're sleepin'.

A'budy lives lang after they're laughed at.  
Dinna tie a knot wi' yer tongue ye canna lowse  
wi' yer teeth.

He that spits against the wind spits in his ain face.

He was scant o' news that telt his faither was hanged.

He'll tell it tae mair than he meets.

Heedna "says," or ye'll ne'er sit at ease.

When these proverbs were coined news was scarce and precious, at least so the man must have thought who said: "Dinna tell lees for want o' news."

If our proverbs have little good to say of love, friendship, and marriage, they have much to say of money. "Nae freen like the penny" is a triumphant and materialistic expression of joy. "God send ye mair sense and me mair siller" is more a pious exclamation than a proverb, and sets one wondering if the person who so spoke did not need both.

"If it werna for the belly the back wad wear gold." It must have been some harassed mother of a big family who said that first. "A' complain o' want o' siller; nane complain o' want o' wit," is a confession which holds true to-day.

"He that cheats me aince, shame fa' him; he that cheats me twice, shame fa' me," is a wordly wise proverb which has much to recommend it.

"A sillerless man gangs fast through the market," may be true of a man-body, but we have known women, without a penny to spend, having quite a long and delightsome "dander" through the market! The cynicism of this is rich, "Put your hand twice tae yer bannet for aince tae yer pooch." It reminds one of the irate old beadle who said to the polite lady who used to curtsey to the collection plate, "Less o' yer mainners an' mair o' yer siller."

"Put twa pennies in a purse an' they'll creep thegither," is an inducement to thrift; and here is canny advice to a bachelor, "The wife's aye welcome that comes wi' a crooked oxter." The "crooked oxter" implies that she comes carrying



gear. And yet we have a Scottish proverb which says, "Marry for love an' work for siller."

Mrs. Poyser would have loved our proverbs about bargains, she who gloried in belittling the pedlar's pack and the scantiness of his measure. "Cadgers aye crack o' creels," we say of a man who talks "shop" all the time. Of a man who wants something for nothing we say, sarcastically, "Ye are o' the MacTaks, but no' o' the MacGies." Of a man who boasts of his bargains we say, "His eggs hae a' twa yolks." "Pay before hands ne'er weel served." This, if true, reflects sadly upon human nature.

There is one beautiful and well-known proverb which our national bard has made immortal: "Ilka blade o' grass keeps its ane drap o' dew."

Hanging was common in these good old days, and we find reference to gallows, hangmen, "widdys" (that is gallows), and ropes in many of our proverbs. "Never marry a widow unless her first husband was hanged" is a snappy piece of address. "He was missed by the water, but caught by the widdy," tells of a fairly adventurous person.

"He rises ower early that is hangit ere noon" is another cynical proverb, which hits off the fool-hardy, and here is an awful warning to the rash—"Hasty was hanged, but speed-o-fit wan awa'."

"Hang a thief when he's young, and he'll ne'er steal when he's auld," is excellent advice,

“Hangin’s sair on the eyesicht,” savours of caustic humour.

The rough and ready justice of our forefathers is enshrined in “Jeddart” justice—“First hang a man, then try him.”

“When ilka ane gets their ain, the thief will get the widdy,” points to a time when stealing was punished very effectually.

“Who steals the fire, steals the blessing,” is a proverb which is probably unfamiliar to modern ears, yet to our fore-folk, in its native Gaelic, it was well known and was full of significance.

To them it was the bard’s word, and before that the Druid’s, and came from the twilight of our history, when fire was the immediate object of man’s worship, when to put forth “unsained” hands to steal the sacred element was sacrilege of the blackest. “Fire,” “blessing” synonymous terms, how can this be? Here is an old tale from the “*céilidh*,” one of many, and one which illustrates the proverb:—

A farmer’s house was apparently bespelled. Cattle died, crops failed, there was no strength in the ale, the bee-skeps had no honey and, worst of all, the children dwined. The farmer, carrying a burning peat, encircled the house thrice, going “deasoil,” but all in vain—the house was still unsained. Here was a spell so potent it needed something stronger than fire circumambulation. They consulted a wise man, a seer. “In the end fire must prevail,” quoth he. “That was the word



of the old wise folk. The one who bespelled you is doing so through fire. You must find out who steals your fire, for it is that one who steals your blessing."

Living near them was an old woman to whom they had always shown kindness. It seemed cruel to suspect her, yet she was their nearest neighbour. Next day both parents went to the fields, but the wife slipped round the back of the house and entered by a window, just as Shenag, tongs in hand, and holding a red peat, was stealing out of the door. "Ah Shenag," cried the farmer's wife, "it is thus you repay kindness?" The old woman gave a great start, the burning peat fell on the floor, and she herself fled. Next minute the farmer coming in was met by a hare coursing madly past. Shenag was never seen again. Prosperity returned to the farmhouse!

Another proverb from the same far-off source is, "No ill comes from the fire." The fires of Baal, the sacrificial, purifying fires are thus referred to, and what could come from them but blessings? In Burghead, Morayshire, when they burn the clavie on the last night of the year (old style), and when showers of golden sparks fly thick from the blazing sacrifice, one can hear a murmur here and there from some of the old inhabitants. "There go the witches." All the ills, the malefic influences, the witchcraft of the year are being consumed by the fire; the village is being purified by the same

mysterious element. So it is true, "No ill comes from the fire," nothing but good, great good.

In English we say of a man in perplexity, "He is on the horns of a dilemma;" in Gaelic the old word is more picturesque; it is: "He is between two fires," and the fires here referred to are again the sacred fires of Baal. When at Beltane these fires were kindled, a "devoted" person had to leap through them a certain number of times, and it was supposed that the direction in which he leaped influenced his after life. No wonder, then, if he should hesitate as to whether to choose the eastern fire or the western one. So he was "between two fires," and a whole page of history is illuminated for us by this old folk-word.

"In the end fire and water shall prevail" is one of the Druid's words, and is interesting because it introduces the other sacred element, water. Belief in this folk-word we find curiously interwoven with old baptismal and burial rites. Should the new-born child not be "sained" by fire and water, its ghost would go wailing in distress throughout all the ages. "*Taran*" is the word for such an unfortunate child. We see from this that baptism was known in pre-Christian times. To a troublesome, sleepless child a weary mother will say, "But why should I scold you? There was not enough water put upon you when you were baptised."

"Water is my witness," is a proverb, or rather

an invocation, used by farmers when clinching a bargain. Again it is the Druid's word, the invoking of the sacred element to witness the words uttered, and to make them binding upon both parties.

A more modern Gaelic proverb, and one with a good deal of significance for those of us who have Highland blood in our veins, is "Far off cattle have long horns." The ownership of these same far off cattle was, if rumour speaks true, a little hazy. But there was no doubt about their desirability.

"A home-sick woman will never bear giants" was first said when a Highland bride was forced to mate with a Sassenach. "A stolen bitch will never bear healthy pups" is, one hopes, more a wish than a fact. The Celt never believed in the possibility of one good person in a bad household. "There are no lap-dogs in the fox's litter," he will tell you.

"Speak of the ford as you find it," is a folk-word coined when bridges were unknown. It is curious how many fords had bad names, too. Travellers did well to approach them cautiously. You might get across all right; but then you might not. Their very names make fearsome reading. The Ford of the Kelpies, the Ford of the Spoils, the Hangmen's Ford, the Ford of the Black Beast of the Burns! Who would not dread crossing these?

"*Mas breug uam e is breug thugam e*," is a Gaelic proverb of great aptness. It means, "If

it is a lie from me, it was a lie to me." I heard it first in a "céilidh" house, and it prefaced one of the most beautiful old tales I have ever heard. Here it is, and like its first narrator I say, "*Mas breug uam e is breug thugam e.*"

"One harvest time two shearers had left their home in the mountains, and were making their way to the field of the farmer who had hired them. They travelled all night, and the day was breaking as they entered the lowland glen. On one side was a high hill, and just as the sun was coming forth they saw, crossing the road in front of them, a company of tall, god-like men, swinging along, one after the other, and singing as they went. 'What is the hour?' asked one of the harvesters, fearing they might be late. The company of strangers stood still, and then the foremost replied: 'We are not of the seed of Adam, for us time is not,' then the whole company swung up the hill with the morning sun shining in their faces, the air full of marvellous music as they went."

There, then, is the tale to you. "If it's a lie from me, it was a lie to me," but who can deny but the tale has glamour and magic in it which touch the heart? Who will dare to say that these things may not be?

Does not the Book tell us that "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

## THE PURE BOX.

OUR forefolk had an easy, unconventional way of spelling which sometimes bewilders their descendants of the present day. Take for instance the "Pure Box," to which reference is made time and again in old church records. What does it mean? Were its contents "clean," "unsoiled," "unmixed," which are the meanings given in the dictionary for "pure?" Alas, no! *Au contraire!* The "Pure Box" was that piece of church furniture known by more expert spellers as the "Poor Box," and there is no blinking the fact that the chief contributors to it were evildoers, who gave not because of their Christian liberality, but because they had to. Here is a significant entry:—"The minister represents that the session funds were small, that few fines were got in from delinquents, and that the clerk's salary had not been paid for three years. The elders are urged to think of this." What was the result of their thinking? Has this entry which we come on a little later anything to do with it? "Byrun penalties to be at once uplifted." These penalties, of course, went into the "Pure Box."

Here is another entry bearing on the subject:—"The minister exhortit the people to repentance, while George Shortus, elder, searched the town."

Every person who was not in church was fined. Sometimes the beadle did the searching, and was rewarded by getting each Sabbath day a pint of ale and a new pair of shoes once a year. This, doubtless, would make him still more zealous in his vigilance.

The Church in those days exercised a cruel and unceasing watchfulness, not only over spiritual transgressions, but over breaches of the civil law. From running home from church in an "oncivil" hurry to breaking the Seventh Commandment, from poaching to murdering a fellow man, all alike were dealt with by the Church, and, no matter what the punishment, there was always a fine. Cruel and intolerant as many of these were, they were always extorted ruthlessly. Could anything be more cold-blooded than this? A poor man had lost his wife, and the funeral was to take place on the Sabbath. The man was late for church, and though he excuses himself somewhat pathetically by saying "They had few to carry the corpse, and the people did not gather so timeously as he had expected," he was fined seven shillings. For non-attendance at church there were various fines. The delinquent must have a very good excuse (burying a dead wife was not sufficient). Six shillings was a common fine, but if the absentee were wealthy the fine was larger.

In those days artificial manure was unknown, so the seaware thrown up by the tide was in great demand for dressing the land. Time and again



the ecclesiastical thunder rolls forth against "sundries who gather seaware on the Lord's Day." Evidently there was a session act framed for the express purpose of putting down this evil, for a certain "John Burgess and his servants in Upper Auchinreath, in Morayshire, are accused of a breach of the Sabbath and of the session's act by gathering ware at the sea early on Monday morning. They had drawn upwards of 300 loads before three o'clock on Monday morning." The inference is that they must have begun on Sunday night! They were dealt with faithfully, also fined. For exchanging and "niffering" their "bodie cloaths, as coat, plaid, and vest on the Sabbath day, and also for exchanging snuff mulls," James Cuie and William Gun had to make public confession and to pay fines.

As early as 1596 the kirk session of Elgin denounces in no measured terms the "playing of bowlis and golff upon the Sabbath, and in the tyme of the sermon." A certain culprit who was caught red-handed (as it were) was sentenced to pay five pounds. It is deplorable to find the names of elders among the evildoers. They promise amendment, however, and they pay their fines like gentlemen. Walter Haye, a goldsmith in Elgin, had to be rebuked for playing "golff," and another strange charge is brought against this somewhat truculent craftsman. To certain of his own friends he used to give church tokens. To be the possessor of such a treasure was to

have the badge of respectability. For this act of friendliness he is fined, the session going almost out of its way to prove that the recipients of these badges were not worthy of them; likewise that Walter had no business to hand them about so generously, even if he did make them. Anglers who fished on Sabbath day were sternly dealt with, and for using salmon cobbles on that day we have a volley of wrath, and a fine.

Perhaps one of the quaintest ways of making money which the church had was in connection with pews. In those days there were no seats in the church, so folks used to carry stools. When luxurious hearers began to put in pews another source of income was revealed to the kirk session. They would charge rent for the pews! True, the pew-owners paid for the pews, but for liberty to erect them in the church they must pay rent. Two and sixpence was charged for each seat, and the money went into the "Pure Box." In 1743 a certain minister went a little further; he furnished a loft in his church with pews, and rented them to the sitters at the following rates:—In the fore pew, sixpence; in the second, fivepence; in the third, a groat; and others, threepence. It is the first reference we have come across to the vexed question of seat rents.

Not only were the pews profitable, but owing to the behaviour of the sitters, these also were made a source of income. For instance, a certain haughty pew-owner finding one day that a neigh-



bour, a poor (but uppish) person, was comfortably established in his pew, he ordered him to come out at once. The intruder refused, and embroidered his refusal with some flowers of speech. Whereupon the lawful owner, forgetful of place and day, seized the insolent fellow by the throat, " wrung his nose to the effusion of blood, and thumped him of the back." For this disgraceful display of temper he was heavily fined. History is silent as to what was done to the other man. Perhaps " the laying on of hands " which he had already suffered was considered enough. One source of income enjoyed by the church in the good old days came from unruly and irreverent wives. Injured in-offensive husbands had time and again to complain that their wives " flyted " them, and were " on-civil " to them. One wild woman had to pay twenty shillings to the session for abusing her husband. One wonders where the money came from. Did the injured husband have to pay the fine as well as to put up with such treatment? If so, this seems very like adding insult to injury.

Weddings, burials, and baptisms were all charged for, and if a couple could not satisfy the session that they knew a certain amount of Scripture they were fined. A young couple had to deposit a certain sum with the session ere they were allowed to get married; then, if the wedding were on too ambitious a scale, if it were a " penny brydell," if they could not recite the Lord's Prayer and the Commandments, and various other stipulations,

the fine was kept, and sometimes the fine amounted to five pounds. Hard lines, no doubt, but it went into the "Pure Box!"

This important piece of church furniture was a good substantial article, built for strength rather than beauty, yet the curious thing is that it needed frequent mending. The lock seemed often in the hands of the smith. One record tells how thirty pence were paid for "causing the 'Pure Box' to steek and lock." In 1637 "Ane general Act was passed commanding each church to have a 'Pure Box' wherein to keep the penalties; that the elders keep the key thereof, and that no minister sall have any meddling therewith under severe penalty."

Despite this act and threat, "the church box of Inverkeithney was taken from the minister's house (as is alleged). Seeing the minister can give no debtor for the same, he is ordained to make up the loss thereof out of his own purse, and to furnish a new box." That expression, "as is alleged," is particularly pertinent. This is not the only fling the session has at the minister. For not being properly attentive to the sick he is fined; the friends of the sick are also fined for not "advertising" the minister of the same. Besides these fines, there were the weekly collections at the services. In some congregations these were gathered in the "ladle" by the elders, and afterwards placed in the box. This offering, being left

to the goodness of the donors' hearts, was often made up largely of bad coppers or of "doights," the twelfth part of a penny! In one church there was left in the "Pure Box" such a weight of bad money that it was sold for sevenpence half-penny per pound. Seven stones of bad money belonging to Keith realised £2 18s. 6d. In one congregation, that of Nairn, it is proudly recorded that the weekly collection amounted to three shillings, all good money! Well done, Nairn! Perhaps the most gruesome source of income was that got from the property of witches who had been done to death by the Church. In 1650 Agnes Kirkland, a reputed witch, was executed, and out of her gear the session actually claimed twelve pounds, a fact which reflects little credit upon them.

What of the disbursement of the "Pure Box?" In those days when there were no poor laws, the Church kept a fatherly (sometimes a stepfatherly) eye upon the poor, the deformed, and the weak-minded. Here is an entry which seems a little strange, "Gave a halfpenny to an object." Not till we have gone further down the page does it dawn on us that the "object" is a deformed person. All we can say is to echo "Punch" when he declared he would rather be a subject than an object! And what a lordly sum! "'Twa hirplin weemen" get a little help (the sum is not mentioned), and a "lassie with a cruickit back bane" gets a sixpence. To "ane pure man, being a scollar," the sum of six shillings is given, and to a

harmless creature named rather significantly "the daft lady," five shillings is given.

Again and again we get interesting glimpses of the historical events of the day. When Glasgow was burned in 1652, the Synod of Moray report that they have letters from some minister of Glasgow "bearing ane earnest request that the several brethren would represent to the people the distressed condition of the people of Glasgow." It is comforting to find an entry, dated April, 1653, stating, "Collection for Glasgow, all the congregations have done their duty except one or two of mean condition." In 1678 the same Synod is urged to help some Montrose merchants and seamen who had been taken by the Turks, and in May, 1620, the congregation of Dunbar collect money "for the Scottishmen lying in Algiers, and taken by the Turks." The Huguenots were another object of charity, and side by side with this collection is one for the people of Cullen, who had suffered much by the Marquis of Montrose burning their town. In 1746 a widow, who kept a baker's shop in Elgin, makes an appeal for help, as the Pretender's soldiers had looted her shop when returning from Culloden.

It was the custom for the minister to distribute the poor money every Sunday after service, the recipients crowding round the church door. One rather well-to-do farmer appeared at the kirk door one Sunday morning, and to everyone's surprise the minister, after speaking a few pitying

words to him, gave him a whole shilling. The others gasped in astonishment, and the farmer humbly touched his bonnet and departed. Nothing else was talked of all that day, but on Monday there was another surprise, for it was reported that this same farmer was to appear before the session on a charge of poaching! When the day of trial came the man pleaded "Guilty," and a fine was imposed. "What!" cried the minister, "fine that poor man! Did you not all see me give him something out of the poor-box last Lord's Day? Admonish him and let him go!" Some one who had seen the minister and the farmer in close consultation the previous week said it was a put-up job; that the minister had been dining on venison lately, and salmon was not unknown on his table. Probably there were mere malicious rumours.

In closing, a word might be said about the "Harden Goun?" The price of it came out of the "pure box." The harn cost a pound, and the making of it twelve shillings. The stool of repentance was also paid, and all the terrible items attendant on a witch's burning were charges on the kirk box. There is one item which makes one's blood boil to read after all these years. It is "For harden to be jumpers to the witches, and for the making of them £3 16s." Truly strange things were done in the name of religion.

BY 'TUCK O' DRUM  
AND  
THE HARDEN GOUN.

THERE is something wonderfully intriguing about the expression, "by tuck o' drum."

It carries us back to the days when the town drummer, clad in a little brief authority and splendid garments, paced our streets, an important and awe-inspiring figure. Yet, it is possible that had we lived in those times the sight of the drummer and the brave music of his drum, would have filled us with vague alarm.

Up till 1792, the townsfolk of Thurso used to be summoned "by tuck o' drum" to work in the laird's fields. No matter how busy they might be about their own crops, they had, on hearing the "tuck o' drum," to leave everything, and hurry to Thurso East Castle, there to work for their laird. During the minority of "Good Sir John Sinclair," the author of a famous work on statistics, his mother, Lady Janet, used this method of summoning her son's tenants, and if they did not obey they were threatened with poinding of their tongs or their best blanket. To a hearth fire where peats are burned the tongs is an almost indispensable implement in the building up and replenishing of the fuel. The loss of it then must have



been a real hardship. And to lose one's best blanket in the chilly climate of Caithness was no small punishment. There was something cruelly malicious in the choice of the articles to be poinded, no wonder the frightened tenants hurried to obey the summons of the drum.

They tilled, spread dung, sowed, and harrowed ; they carted home the peats ; they thatched and made ropes for the laird's outhouses ; they weeded the land, mowed and ingathered the hay, and those who lived near the sea-shore carted sea ware for manure. The wives had to spin lint, they had also to give and to spin a certain amount of wool.

For these folks the sound of the drum was one which made them anxious. We can imagine, then, the gratitude of these harassed tenants when one bold spirit arose who defied "the tuck of the drum." This was Sandy Murray, a native of Thurso, who went up to the drummer, and after telling him with the utmost candour what he thought of him, drove his staff through the drum ! Here was a declaration of independence with a vengeance. "Go an' tell Leddy Jennet fit I've done, and tell her she need never send anither drummer, for I'll serve him the same !" he declared. Of what happened when the drummer returned to the castle history is silent. But so far as we know the drum never went "tuck-tuck-tucking" through the grey streets of Thurso again. Let us record our gratitude to the bold Sandy. With the coming of age of Sir John, the

grievances of the tenants were looked into ; Lady Janet's zeal was curtailed, and one cannot help thinking that the action of Sandy must have had a great share in these reforms.

To the citizens of Elgin the " tuck o' the drum " must have had a more sinister sound, as there, in the old cathedral town, the drum was used in connection with the punishment of evil doers. Towards the close of the sixteenth century the Little Cross was a place of public punishment, and thither the culprit was accompanied by " tuck o' drum," and, one may be sure, by a crowd of interested and jeering spectators as well. Sometimes the victim was conducted from the West Port to the " joggis " fixed to the Little Cross, practically the whole length of the town. Doubtless the way must have seemed interminable to the evil doer, as the drum beat its sinister " tuck-tuck-tuck " in time with his footsteps.

Andrew Nukill suffered in this fashion in 1652, being taken from the west end of the Tolbooth, where he was whipped, to the Little Cross, where he again received a dozen stripes. The publicity of this punishment, as well as the physical pain, must have cured Andrew of his particular sin, which in this case was stealing. For him, ever after " the brave music of the distant drum " was fraught with painful memories. But stealing was not the only crime which met public punishment. Slandrous persons were made to sit upon a stool, with shaved heads, for a certain length of



time, and afterwards they were banished out of Elgin, and the music which played them forth was "the tuck o' the drum!"

With the passing of years, other and presumably milder measures were used in dealing with the wicked, and the drum was used as a time measure. It was beaten at four o'clock in the morning, and the town bell rang at five; then in the evening the bell rang at eight, and one hour later the "tuck o' the drum" was heard, bidding all labour cease. It is an interesting link with the wonderful past of the city of Elgin to find a bell still rung there morning and evening. No longer does the drum supplement its summons. When it fell into disuse we are not sure, but for all who have ears to hear, they can still catch the "tuck o' the drum" as the drummer slips through the old streets, and, like children, we follow its fascinating "tuck, tuck" adown the years.

The words, the "harden gown," seem to us strange rather than sinister, yet reading old church records we get a glimpse of what the "harden gown" stood for, and we feel a pang of pity for the unfortunate wearers, and for the troubled hearts the "gown" too often covered. The "harden gown" was no other than the "white sheet" or the "sack cloth" in which the penitents had to stand and do penance. It was worn in public, sometimes at the pillar, sometimes at the market cross, most frequently at the kirk door, and afterwards within the church itself. The beadle had

to array the law breaker in the "goun," and place him in the doorway so that all who entered might see him. Then, when the congregation had all assembled, while the minister was at the "preliminaries," the beadle solemnly led in the "harden gown" (a shuddering human being inside it!), and the poor creature was placed in full view of the congregation on the stool of repentance. Sometimes he had to stand. To add to the horror of the situation, he was barefooted and bareheaded, and at the time men used to wear their hats in the church.

The stool was a curious looking thing, in two tiers, one high, and the other quite low. Sinners of the blackest dye had to stand on the higher platform, as it were. "The highest degree of the penitent stuill" was how it was technically referred to; the lower stool was "the cock stool." The victim then being established on the stool, the minister offers up prayer, and be sure the sins of the wearer of the "harden gown" are confessed with the utmost frankness. The sins for which the wearing of this gown was the punishment were so varied that the garment got worn out, and Synods are very emphatic in their orders that presbyteries shall provide themselves with new gouns when the old are gone. The shape of it was like a cloak, and slipped over the head. It was made of coarse unbleached linen or harn, and it must have rasped the tender skin beneath it, which no doubt the Church fathers considered was

all for the soul's good. It is amazing how much these gowns cost. In one parish there is an old account for "a repentance gown," as it was more genteelly called, and the amount is £4 4s. 6d. The kirk of Kirkmichael had to get a new gown, and they gave orders that it was to be made "like unto that which they have in Straitoun." So there were evidently different fashions. History is silent as to wherein they differed. One fears that to the wearers the shape of the sleeve or the length of the skirt were matters of supreme indifference. The stools, too, got worn out. They were, of course, made of wood, so one soft hearted (?) presbytery ordered the new one to be made of stone. It is strangely comforting to read that once three reprobates who had done penance in sackcloth and sat on the repentance stool were so little truly repentant in their hearts that they broke the stool afterwards.

What were the sins for which the wearing of the "harden gown" was considered fit punishment? In the old Synod records of Moray we read that somewhere about 1632 Elspet Watson, for the "charming of Bessie Russel," was referred to the Synod. Further investigations reveal that Elspet had to wear the gown, to sit on the stool, and to promise to reform. Doubtless the Church would put some of its many spies to the congenial task of watching Elspet and reporting her behaviour. It is shameful to read of the army of "informers" used by the Church at this time, and lives were

under ceaseless and merciless scrutiny. In 1639, the Presbytery of Forres, "under pane of standing in sac-clothe," orders all persons to refrain from repairing to holy wells and chapels. In an entry later on we find that Ronald and Janet Smythe did not actually disobey the order, but they sent a messenger for the holy water. It might have been a drink for a sick bairn, it might have been to satisfy the craving of some old person who "desired a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate," but the Church took no notice of any extenuating circumstance. The couple were dragged before the kirk session, and ordered to do public penance at the pillar in sack cloth, bare headed and bare footed, and to pay a fine of forty libs. In 1643, John Ogilvie, for two terrible sins, was ordered to stand sixteen days in sack cloth at the pillar. The Presbytery seem to think his sins were all the more heinous because one of them was committed on the Fast Day.

The Presbytery of Abernethy were deeply exercised in their minds with Neill Grant, who had a familiar spirit with whom he conversed. They were enjoined by the Synod "to labour for his confession." One wonders what tender form their "labours" took. The "harden gown" would not be the least of them. It is said that even Cromwell's soldiers were amazed and horrified at the methods the Kirk of Scotland took to make poor wretches "confess" to sins which they never committed. Later on we find that Neill Grant,

though charged with having a familiar spirit, is able to clear himself, but we have hardly done more than given a sigh of relief when we meet Katherin Macgillichrist, of the parish of Forres, up before her betters charged with the sin of witchcraft.

Sometimes the congregations turned on the session, and a minister, Mr. William Watsone, of Rothiemurcus, was thrown into a "dubby" vault, his hands tied behind him, and Girsell and Barbara Grant, who witnessed this outrage, told that afterwards they had planned to throw him into a loch. His sin was that he would not marry a certain couple. Evidently the rough usage he got made him more amenable to reason, for he performed the ceremony, and escaped the ducking. Afterwards, however, the Synod dealt faithfully with him.

James Urquhart, of Old Craig, being in the company of renegades, had to appear in sack cloth for two Lord's days, and at Keith a titled lady had to wear the "harden gown" in full view of the congregation. Her name is not revealed, but her sin is duly and frankly chronicled, and we cannot withhold a certain amount of admiration for those old Puritans who were no respecter of persons.

The "muckle kirk" of Elgin must have witnessed many of those distressing cases, and there the session decreed that the penitent should sit on the stool with "ane mytre on their heads whereon is written the sin for which they are punished." Sometimes the writing was put on the chest.

Slanderers and those who used filthy language were thus punished, and perhaps one of the strangest causes for using the "harden gown and the cock stool" was when certain "browster wives of Elgin made evil, washy ale."

There is still in the church of Spynie the old stool of repentance, with the date, 1629, roughly marked on its back. It is one of the "single storey" or "cutty" stool make. The last time it was used was after Culloden, when the penitent was a girl who must have regretted, as did many another, the passing of the army of bonnie Prince Charlie.



## CONCERNING CURSES.

**I**N the good old days it was quite permissible to curse one's enemies; in fact, if one had any pretensions to being a prophet, it was expected. The Druids were past masters at the art, and even the saintly Columba used to denounce his enemies in no measured terms. Adamnan tells us with evident relish how a certain "rich and stingy" man despised the saints and showed them no hospitality. "The riches of that niggardly man who hath despised Christ in the strangers that come to his gate as his guests will become less and less from this day; he shall become a beggar; his son shall go from door to door with a half-empty wallet, he shall be slain by a rival beggar in the pit of a threshing floor." This was a fairly comprehensive and far-reaching curse, "and all was exactly fulfilled," adds the pious historian, not without pleasure. The saint of Iona used to climb a hill when he wished to curse his enemies. It was thought that curses so pronounced would fall on the heads of the evil doers. Curses had to be uttered in a loud voice, and as Columba was leaving nothing to chance, he was careful to observe all the ritual. It is rather interesting to find that the Saint believed curses could be hurled against himself.

“ The evil eye ” was firmly believed in by all the Columbans, and there still exists the old Iona charm to “ sain ” all who might be “ overlooked.”

I appeal to Mary, aidful mother of men ;  
I appeal to Bride, foster-mother of Christ-omnipotent ;  
I appeal to Columba, apostle of shore and sea ;  
I appeal to heaven,  
To all the saints and angels that be above.

In an old Gaelic “ grace before meat ” we have a reference to the power of the evil eye. Here it is translated by an eminent scholar—

“ May my heart always bless my eyes,  
And my eyes bless all they see ;  
And may I always bless my neighbour,  
Though my neighbour should never bless me.”

There is something sinister and far-reaching in the Druids’ curses, something which whispers of an underworld of wickedness which before their wise old eyes was but as an open book. A wisp of straw flung in the face of an enemy, a few mysterious muttered words, and lo ! the man is mad. Raving mad, too. The croaking of the raven told them dark secrets, and they practised a heathen form of baptism in which the child was devoted to the powers of darkness, and to their service for ever, for they believed in eternal life. The laying on of the evil eye was another way in which they cursed their enemies, as was also the evil ritual of turning “ widdershins ” instead of



“deasoil.” The elements were their servants, and they could raise a storm so that their enemies, being caught in it, would perish. This strange old curse was used by a Morayshire witch, and there is no doubt it came to her from the twilight time of the Druids. A rag was dipped in water, and it was beaten with a heavy piece of wood while this incantation was muttered :

“ I beat this rag upon this stane  
To raise the wind in the devil’s name,  
It shall not fall till I please again.”

South-running water was another medium which figured largely in the Druid ritual of curses, and fire was their most sacred element. One old Gaelic folk-word charm against this evil thing ends with “And the king of the elements shall help me.” Although those old medicine men did not practise human sacrifice, there were cases known in which human life was forfeited to propitiate some angry god who dwelt in the elements.

When the Reformed Kirk of Scotland began to exercise its power, it found itself up against countless old superstitious practices which had clearly survived from the time of the Druids, and which kirk sessions all over Scotland set about suppressing with all the artillery of the Church Militant. The curse of the evil eye was perhaps one of the most difficult folk-beliefs to combat. One wonders has it quite died away even in those enlightened days. “The singular malefic influence of a glance

has been felt by most persons in life ; an influence that seems to paralyse intellect and speech, simply by the mere presence in the room of some one who is mystically antipathetic to our nature. For the soul is like a fine-toned harp that vibrates to the slightest external force or movement, and the presence and glance of some person can radiate around us a divine joy, while others may kill the soul with a sneer or a frown. We call these subtle influences mysteries, but the early races believed them to be produced by spirits good or evil, as they acted on the nerves of the intellect." Such is how a modern writer speaks of this ancient curse which from the very nature of it seems potent to-day as in ancient times. This curse is due to soul magic : it can be used by any one having sufficient magnetism and personality ; it is not the sole property of warlocks and witches, though they have been supposed to know of ways in which the curse may become more potent than if cast by a mere ordinary person. Evil wishes are at the back of this old folk-belief, and whether the curse comes from the actual eye or from the brain behind the eye, does not materially matter.

Witches often used to bespell children, if they had a grudge against the parents. "Forspoken" is the old word which covers this devil's form of cursing. In order to wreak vengeance on her enemy, a witch could curse her enemy's cows, take the honey out of the skep, the strength out of the ale, could take the colours out of the dyeing

vat (all except black, which, being the devil's own colour, was immune), could take the corn out of the ear, and the fish out of the net. For securing those ends, the witch had a great number of peculiar rituals to observe. To take the milk yield away, tow plaited the wrong way (widdershins) and drawn beneath the cow's feet was the witch ritual. In order to take the strength from ale, mould from the kirkyard (if it were thrown up by a mole so much the better) placed beneath the door of the enemy, worked the spell. The strength of the ale was found in the witch's brew, while the unfortunate enemy had nothing but water left.

Isobell Trayl, a witch of Perth, was accused of working this evil charm, and of teaching it to another woman. She in turn, said Preip, a witch wife burnt at Banff, had taught her. The kirk session dealt with Isobell in their own faithful way, which seems to have roused still more evil in her heart, for she "sat down on her kneys and gave the minister, his wyff, and bairns malediction."

One can trace out in the annals of old kirk sessions, touching tales of mothers filled with anxiety for their "forespoken" bairns who are ready to face the terrors of the session if only they can have their sick little ones restored. "Consulting with witches was considered only second to being one; yet in 1631 a desperate mother asked the advice of a witch for her child. The wife of David Morrice of Perth was convinced her bairn was a changling. She consulted Isable

Haldane, "ane witch wife" who came to see the child, and pronounced it to be a "shargie," and gave it a drink, after which the child died.

Black wool and butter, a curious mixture, were used to bespell children, and south-running water (evidently a fragment of Druidical lore) played an important part in some rituals. Janet Traill, another witch, actually confessed that the fairy folk had bidden her do ill and cast spells on other folk, but she refused. It is from her own confession we learn that green yarn was a medium of black magic. In order to bring sickness on her enemy, it had to be cut into nine pieces and buried in three lairds' lands.

A favourite curse in those good old days was to wish that a newly-married couple might have no children. "May you have no son to succeed you," Isabel Goudie, the Auldearn witch, said to the Laird of Park. He had a son, at the time, and the child was made the medium for punishing his father. Witches did not stop at the mere uttering of this wish; there was a certain rite to be performed. Cakes were baked, the meal having been taken by magic spells from other folks' girnals or meal chests. The cakes were kneaded widdershins, a hole was made in the centre, and through this hole a little image of a child was passed thrice backwards and forwards and certain words were muttered the while.

When it came to the cursing of men and women, the "corp criadh," as it is called in Gaelic, was

made. This is a curious form of black magic common to all Celto-Latin lands. An image of the person who is to be harmed is made. The "corp" is made of clay; pins, rusty nails and needles are thrust into it, each accompanied with a malediction; the image is then buried in the ground or placed in a stream. It is supposed that as it wastes and crumbles away, so will the person whom it represents waste and sicken. Sometimes more pins are stuck in so that more and more torture may come to the victim. So potent are the evil wishes which accompany the making of a "corp criadh" that often death overtakes the bespelled one through sheer mental suggestion. Sometimes wax was used to make the image, in which case it was placed in front of a fire, basted with ale, and as it melted so did the original fall into "the wasting sickness" as they used to call consumption.

Witches who had attained a very high standard of their art used, as a medium of black magic, moon paste. As the name implies, this was made by the moon being pulled out of the sky. This medium had to be made when the moon was full. Certain herbs had to be pounded and mixed; water taken from seven different wells, and the whole thing had to be kneaded in a trough in a kirkyard with chantings and muttered words and turnings innumerable to "widdershins." Images made of this paste were capable of bringing weal or woe according to the wishes of the witch who owned it. Isabel

Goudie used it to help Jean Gordon of Gordons-town, but she used the same medium to bring sickness and death to the house of the Laird of Park.

Witches could afflict their enemies with erysipelas by cutting hair (red if possible) into snippets and scattering it with malediction in the direction of their enemies. Each snippet became a festering sore.

A queer light is thrown upon the methods of the kirk session of Strathbogle who, in 1637, had Isobel Malcolm up before them charged with working harm to her neighbours. She confessed so much, but "the censure of the said Isobel was continued in hope she would be found more guilty." Patrick Malcolm, a friend of hers, who worked with her, is accused of taking away the milk yield from the cows of John Maltman, and also of having turned a rope "widdershins" beneath a cow, and thereby causing it to die. Later on this warlock is summoned to appear before the session, but he flies the country. Isobel also flies, but is caught, and we fear the worst.

In 1646 William Seivwright and George Slorach are accused of being given over to sorcery. They have allotted a piece of land to the "good old man," which is a euphonious way of speaking of the devil. This patch was sometimes called "the gude man's croft" and was set aside as an offering to the evil one. The croft was the scene of strange ceremonies, especially in time of cattle troubles. Once



a live cow was buried in such ground, as a sacrifice to the spirit of "Murrain."

The evil eye was potent to work harm on Nature herself. "She did infect with poison strong, both ponds and pastures all along," is told of one witch who must have been rather a formidable enemy. Another cunning witch was asked for something with which to work mischief, and she told her client to get a stone which had killed a man, a wild boar, and a she-bear, and with such a weapon she could work all the evil she wanted. Very likely; the trouble would be to get such a stone.

Here is a full-blooded curse which is handy to know supposing you should want to put out the eye of your enemy:—"Recite certain psalms backwards, then in the ground under your left foot make a circle like an eye, write on it certain barbarous words and names, and drive with a cooper's hammer into the middle of it a brass nail."

A queer old world in which our fore-folks lived, interesting withal, and as regards the belief in the evil eye, certainly not one to be laughed to scorn. Whatever medium, childish or otherwise, they might have used, the hate and malice behind the mere ritual had to be reckoned with, just as hate and ill-will to-day have to be reckoned with. If "envy breaks the stones," what can be the power of hate as far as the human heart is concerned? Here is a beautiful old "word" to avert ill-will whether on ourselves or on our belongings. "In



the door of the city of Heaven, Christ gave three calls full just ; seven paters in the name of the virgin, and say ' Whoso have laid on thee the eye may it return on themselves or on their children or on their substance ; but thou ! may'st thou be full of health in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.' "

## CONCERNING CHARMS.

**I**N a strange old book on witchcraft, written in the end of the sixteenth century, it is interesting to note what a large proportion of the work is devoted to the healing of sickness and disease by means of charms. And very interesting it is, too, to note the sources from which these charms come; they are either the Druids' word, the witches' word, or the churchman's word. Whatever the source, they are set down with a fine simplicity and singleness of heart which makes the reading of them a thing of vast entertainment to us of to-day. Human nature must have been easily gulled, we say, and then, then we begin to wonder has it changed so very much since those old times. Only the other evening, at the burning of the clavie in Burghead, we overhead a small boy say to another, "Na, I winna gie ye a bittie o' ma clavie stick! It'll brak ma luck!" But that by the way.

There is one disease which seems to have been the dread of humanity from time immemorial, this is epilepsy. There are charms from the three sources quoted, and it is pathetic how, on taking up any newspaper to-day we read, in big letters, this statement: "I cure fits! Positive cure for

falling sickness." An ancient evil, and we fear the remedy is still wrapped in mystery. Here is the Druids' cure. "Take a black cock without a single white feather, make a hole in the ground in the exact spot where the patient took the fit, bury the animal alive in this place, seal the spot with a heavy stone, and mutter over the place an invocation to the earth to swallow the evil."

Druidical charms always include a sacrifice which serves a twofold purpose, to propitiate the angry gods, and to win their favour and reap a benefit. There lingers still in some remote parts of the Highlands the belief that if one passed between the fire and an epileptic the disease might leave the patient and enter the man who passed between him and the sacred hearth flame. The witches' word has not the same "pomp and circumstance" as the Druids'. It is revolting rather:—"Take the skull of a suicide, and out of it drink water at dawn." Another was, "Take a live snake, put it into a bottle filled with pure water and cork it tightly. The patient is to get the infusion, but is not to be told how this medicine was obtained."

Frankly speaking, neither cure strikes one as agreeable. The churchman's word is not much better. "Take the parings of the nails of the fingers and toes, bind them with hemp with a silver sixpence wrapped in a piece of paper on which is written the names of the Trinity, tie the parcel beneath the wing of a black cock, and bury in a hole. The most God-fearing man in the district

must watch and pray all night by the fire, which must not be let out."

Pope Leo got a charm from heaven sent specially to himself, and among the many evils which it can cure there is special reference to "the falling sickness." This heaven-sent charm is a most comprehensive affair, and safeguards one against enemies, robbers, pestilence, thunder, lightning, fire, and spirits. It is also of great use to young mothers and their infants, and "all through virtue of these holy names of Jesus following," then come twenty-one names, ending with those of the four evangelists. "The charm had to be written with great devotion, carried about every day, and every day the person was to say three paternosters, three aves, and one creede." It is worth recalling that among letters found on a dead German in the Great War was a copy of this old and useless charm. Another cure was, "Take the sick man by the hand and whisper these words softly in his ear: 'I conjure thee by the sunne and the moon and the gospel of this daie, delivered by God to Hubert, Giles, Cornelius, and John, that thou rise and fall no more.'"

Headaches are not wholly a modern evil; our forefolk suffered from them too; their cure was, "Tie a halter about your head wherewith one hath been hanged." The matter-of-fact way in which this prescription is given implies that a halter of this description was one of the easiest things in the world to get! Perhaps it was. Some

time ago, when some woodmen were cutting down a tree, they came on the bones of a human being at the foot of it, and buried close beside was an ancient rope. It was only too evident what part it had played in some grim and now forgotten tragedy.

Toothache, that cruel enemy of childhood, was cured, but with more difficulty. "Take the tooth of one who has been slain, and scarify the gums with it," is one cure. To mutter between the clenched teeth, "Oh, horse combs and sickles that have so many teeth come heal me of my toothache," was another. There are no directions as to how to get the tooth of a slain person.

Sore eyes or "styes" have afflicted people from all times. One poor woman wept herself well-nigh blind, and then went to a wise man who told her that if she followed his advice she would soon be better. This was to wear around her neck a scroll upon which some magic words had been written, and which she must not read, nor lose. All went well till one sad day she lost the scroll. Immediately her eyes became sore again. When the scroll was found this daughter of Eve looked to see what was written, and when she read she marvelled at her own credulity. For the magic words were profane and horrible and meaningless! Another charm for sore eyes is clearly of Church origin. "The charm of God the Great, the free gift of Mary, the free gift of God; the free gift of every churchman and priest; the free gift of

Michael the Strong that would put strength in the sun." This had to be said in a loud voice and with outstretched arms.

Whooping cough, or "choine cough," as it was called, was cured by holding a live frog over the sufferer's mouth. A mouse roasted alive was another agreeable witch cure, and the churchman's one for the same trouble was "Take three sips of a chalice, when the priest hath said masse, and swallow it down with great devotion." Any one who knows the stress into which a sufferer from whooping cough is thrown will see how difficult this cure was.

Hysteria was not unknown in the good old days, though they called it "being possessed with a devil." The afflicted one must go on his hands and knees to the church, no matter how long the road, no matter how dirty the pathway; and in the church he must hear, with devotion, the priests recite mass. Sometimes the cure is to fast three days, and to go to church on Friday, to hear mass and to hear the Scripture. A scroll with sacred writing, worn round the neck, was another cure. Each so-called cure was a direct appeal to a new set of thoughts, and therein lay its virtue. Who could remember to be hysterical when creeping on all fours to church over a dirty and rough road?

To be able to stop blood was an important matter in the days when arguments too often ended in blows. To this very day there are charms used

for staunching blood, and they are carefully transmitted by word of mouth from one generation to another. Curiously enough, these charms are potent to stop horses bleeding to death as well as human beings. One is, "The Lord rade fair and free; ower the hills of Galilee. He pat the blood to the blood till all upstood;" and so on, ending in the name of the Trinity. Another cure was, "Take a cup of cold water, and let fall there-into three drops of the same blood, and between each drop say a paternoster, or an ave, and then say to the patient, 'Who shall help you?' The patient shall answer 'S. Marie.' Then you say, 'S. Marie stop the issue of blood.'" Here is a rhymed charm for staunching blood:—

In the blood of Adam death was taken,  
In the blood of Christ it was all to shaken;  
And by the same blood I do thee charge  
That thou do run no longer at large.

The sign of the Cross to be made at the end of each line, proves this an old churchman's charm.

Sometimes this charm is put to a wrong use. For instance, a certain man was killing a goat. An enemy of his, who heard of this, passed by just after he had killed the animal, and wanted to bleed the carcase. With a malicious smile on his face the enemy quoted this old charm for the stopping of blood, which proved so potent that not a drop of blood came from the animal's body, and so the carcase was useless.



Minor accidents happened then as now ; a thorn in the flesh or a bone in the throat had to be charmed forth. A certain saint, St. Blaze, had to be invoked. One had to recall how St. Blaze could heal all manner of wild beasts, and this with the calling upon God's name was potent only—and this was important—if it were done on the saint's day ! If the thorn or bone strayed into your anatomy on any other day, you had to have recourse to the simple tweezers.

Long before Pasteur's day there was a cure for the bite of a mad dog. "Put a silver ring on the finger with the which these words are graven (a cross between each) Habay + Hebar + Hebar + and say to the person bitten, 'I am thy saviour, lose not thy life,' and then prick him thrice in the nose till he bleed." Another equally simple cure is : "Take pills made of the skull of one who has been hanged ;" a witches' word evidently, as the first is a churchman's. The writer goes on gravely to warn the bitten one. "In troth this is verie dangerous, insomuch as if it be not speedile and cunninglie prevented either death or frenzy ensueth."

To cure a scorpion's bite is a simple matter. All you have to do is to whisper into the ear of the first ass you meet (whether two legged or otherwise is not specified), "I am bitten with a scorpion," and lo ! you are better. A serpent's bite is more difficult to cure, and must have the witches' word applied to it, the serpent being friendly to witches.

The historian adds that it is better to enchant the serpent before it bites you, "for then it cannot hurt you," he adds convincingly. "I conjure thee, serpent—I command thee serpent—that thou obey me, as wax obeyeth the fire, as fire obeyeth the water, that thou neither hurt me nor any other Christian." With such words is a serpent enchanted.

A serpent "touched with an oak leaf dieth." This is clearly a Druidical belief. Witches prized serpents' and snakes' skins to help them to put on the evil eye, and used to bury them beneath the thresholds of houses, stables, and byres. The cure for the evil eye was to sprinkle holy water, and also to hang boughs, hallowed on Beltane eve, at the doors. And again we glimpse the Druid.

There are many charms for ague. Perhaps the strangest is to "drink wine wherein a sword hath been drowned that hath cut off one's head." Who's head? This charm is a little ambiguous. A careless reader might come to the hasty conclusion that it was the head of the patient. There is one notable charm for ague which is worth mentioning. "Get a scroll about the neck of the sick man, the scroll to be fastened by a monk who will 'will' the man to say certain prayers at each fit, and at the third fit to make him hope to get well, and make him believe he is cured." To-day we say "From day to day and in every way." Truly there is nothing new under the sun.

## OMENS—THE EVIL EYE—MASCOTS

THE lives of our forefathers were governed to a great extent by omens. They regarded these as signs or warnings, and regulated their actions by them. If, for instance, a man sneezed immediately on getting out of bed, he promptly lay down again. He had received a warning. To sneeze ere putting on the right shoe was another warning, but if he put his left shoe on his right foot, that was the worst luck of all. In order to avert the threatened calamity, he must spit in the right shoe and then put it on.

To meet on first going out in the morning a red-haired woman, a squint-eyed child, a flat-soled man, a cat, a hare, or a pig were all signs that the day would go badly. To avert the bad luck, one must make horns with the fore and fourth fingers of the left hand, and mutter "In the city of Heaven Christ gave three calls full just." Seven "paters" in the name of the Virgin will also avert the evil eye, and yet another way is to wet the eyelid with the finger moistened in saliva.

If, in setting out on a journey, one stumbles at his own threshold, the journey will not be prosperous; better to turn back, note day, hour, and place, and count them all unlucky when going on another journey.

To put one's right shoe on and tie it is unlucky. Put on both shoes, and then tie first the left, then the right.

The left shoe should always be put on first. This is an old Columban belief, and has to do with the story of his flight from his enemies when he had only on one shoe.

To hear a crow croaking on the roof of the house is a sign of death. To see an owl fly past, and to hear it screech, is also a death warning.

A strange dog coming into the house is the sign of a new friendship. If a cat comes, an enemy will arrive soon. Black cats are, of course, the exception.

If a child comes between you and your friend as you walk, it is a sign that a division is to take place in your friendship.

To hear the cuckoo ere breaking one's fast is unlucky ; to see a lamb with its back towards one, if it were seen for the first time that season, is also unlucky. The howling of a dog at night portends a funeral.

To spill salt is a sign that one will soon be quarrelling ; wine spilt means misfortune ; to let bread fall into the fire is to make the fairies angry ; and the crumbs on the baking board are the portion of the " wee folk ; " if you do not give these to them they will wreak their spite on you in a hundred ways.

On going into a new house always step over the threshold with your right foot. If you set out to

go anywhere, and suddenly remember something for which you must go back, sit down, count ten (some people say thirteen), turn round in your seat "deasoil," that is sunwards, and you are saved from evil.

To see the new moon over your left shoulder is very lucky. In order to ensure your luck for the month, bow seven times, turn the money in your pocket (silver or gold are best), and ere the month is out you will get a present.

To meet, in the olden days, a friar or a priest, when going to fish or shoot, was bad luck; in fact, one might as well go home. To-day fishermen do not like to meet the minister when they are going to sea, neither are they at all keen on taking him even for a short sail in their boats.

A spider in the morning is unlucky; in the evening very lucky, especially if it is coming towards one. To hear a cock crow at an untoward hour is unlucky.

To be seized with a sudden fit of yawning is a sign that some one is putting the evil eye upon you. Here is the spell to avert it.

The eye that goes over me and through me,  
The eye that pierces to the bone and the marrow,  
I will overthrow, and the elements  
Will help me.

An old Roman belief was that it was unlucky, on going out in the morning, to see a dead beast lying on the right side of one, but "if a beast of

any kind followeth and stayeth at the side and not passeth beyond, it is a good augury."

It is unlucky if a bird fly into the house and out again. Birds take in bad luck and take out good, leaving the house poorer for their coming.

If you have hiccough, hold the right thumb in the left hand. If your furniture creaks and groans, it is a sign that you are to have an unexpected visitor. If fire breaks out, it is a sign of hurried news.

If, in spring, a farmer's plough or harness breaks, the season will be disastrous.

Belief in the power of the evil eye is ancient and universal. Folklore of all lands abounds in reference to it, and cites charms and "friths" to avert its malific influence.

Curiously enough, in more than one witch trial, it was confessed that Satan had told his disciples "If you bear ill-will to anybody, look on them with open eyes, and pray evil for them in my name, and you will get your heart's desire."

What then was the power of this evil eye? The owner of it, presumably a witch,

"Could o'er cast the night, and cloud the moon  
And mak' the deils obedient to her crune,  
At midnight hours o'er the kirkyards she raves  
And howks unchristen'd weans out of their graves;  
Boils up their livers in a warlock's pow,  
Rin witherskins about the hemlock's low;  
And seven times does her prayers backwards pray;  
Then mix't with venom of black tiads and snakes.



Of this unsousy pictures aft she makes  
Of ony ane she hates ;—and gars expire  
With shaw and racking pains afore a fire ;  
Stuck full of pines the devilish pictures melt ;  
The pain by fowk they represent is felt.  
Whilst she and cat sit beeking in her yard, etc.”

In addition to this alarming catalogue, the evil eye had the power of inflicting sufferings and calamities upon both man and beast.

Years before Christ was born a carved hand was used as a charm to ward off the evil eye ; to-day it is still a popular mascot. The most popular cure for the evil eye was *burn airgid*, that is water into which silver coins have been put, as also gold and copper, if you like, but silver by all means. The water had to be raised with a wooden ladle from a stream over which passed the living and the dead, and in the name of the Trinity ; the sign of the cross is made over the contents of the ladle, and a rhyme is repeated.

Another spell for averting the evil eye if the curse has fallen on a cow or any other animal, is to say “ *Fliuch do shuil*,” that is, “ wet your eye.” This wetting of the eye was generally performed by moistening the tip of the finger with saliva, and anointing the eye with it thereafter.

Suppose the evil eye afflicted the milk produce, the owner of the cows was advised to try the following remedy : Whenever one of his cows calves, to take away the calf immediately before he draws milk from his dam, then to take a bottle



and draw milk from the four teats into the bottle, the person so doing being on one knee, and saying : " May God bless these cattle-folds ! ' This I am asking in the name of God, nor am I asking but for mine own." The bottle is then tightly corked and hidden in a safe place. Here is a magic way of retaining the whole by keeping the part. If the cork were to be put in loosely, it is feared that the "*toradh*" would be at the mercy of any one who had the faculty of filching it.

Another method was to snatch a bundle of thatch from the threshold of a suspected person and to burn it beneath a churn. Here is a third : " If you were to lose the loop on the end of the cow-tie, you would lose the milk-produce."

When we give a child a gollywog, we are really giving him a charm to keep off the evil eye. The ugly gollywog is a representation of the god Shaman who was supposed to cure both soul and body, and to be the master of medical cures. Small figures of him used to be made and put along the roadside to ward off evil from cattle. It is easy to see how children would claim these little figures for playthings.

The horseshoe is also potent against the evil eye. It is said that the devil entered the smithy of S——, a certain good old man, who was a farrier, and asked to be shod. The blacksmith agreed, but the pain of shoeing him was so great that the evil one begged the smith to desist. This the old blacksmith refused, and at last, when the devil

begged for mercy on any terms, he made him promise that neither he nor any of his emissaries would enter a building over the threshold of which a horseshoe was nailed.

The sign of the cross was used by Christians from the time of the third century. When people could not write they placed a cross instead of their signature. How many to-day when they are placing a cross on a ballot-paper realise that they are carrying on the old superstition.

When lovers put crosses at the end of their letters, they are subscribing to this old belief, and when we shake hands, our hands are crossed to keep away evil influences. Mizpah! Good Luck! Swastika!

And to-day, motor cars are always adorned with a mascot. Lucky pigs and black cats find a ready sale, and are owned and worn by people who scarcely ever realise the sinister significance these things had for our forefathers.

## WITCHES AND WARLOCKS.

**I**N Scotland, and especially in the Highlands, we have a crop of witchcraft stories with a distinctly individual note in them. Unlike many of our folk tales, they are not variants of those of other countries ; they are distinctly and wholly unique. An examination of the confessions of witches still preserved in the records of the Court of Justiciary will prove this. The witch ritual, the methods for obtaining power, the invocation of the powers of darkness, are all native to the soil. Nay more, some of the witchcraft beliefs are still current, even in these enlightened days !

An ancient cult this : we find reference to witches in Scotland so far back as the fourth century. From that far-off time comes the legend of St. Patrick's flight to Ireland. On account of his piety he was especially disliked by the witches, who chased him out of Scotland. He fled to the Clyde, took boat there, and set sail for Ireland. No witch can cross running water, so these infuriated women had to content themselves with flinging masses of rock after the departing saint. One of these missiles, a mighty one, stands in the Clyde to this good day ; it is the fortress of Dumbarton.

By the close of the seventh century, King Kenneth became alarmed at the spread of witch-

craft, and issued a decree that all "jugglers, wizards, necromancers, and such as call up spirits shall be burnt to death." This law was not rigorously enforced, however, and witchcraft flourished apace. But we have our first authentic case of witch burning in Forres in the tenth century, when three witches made an effigy of the king. The three were burnt, and on the west road of Forres there is to this day an iron-clamped stone to mark the spot, called "The Witches' Stone." The Scottish Parliament of 1563 took up the matter, and decreed "that all who used witchcraft, sorcery, necromancy, or pretended skill therein, and all consulters of witches and sorcerers, shall be punished capitally." Here was, they thought, a most effective way of stopping evil, for how could witches carry on if they had no clients? Yet, in spite of all this, the evil continued, and the Scottish churches, headed by John Knox, took up the matter. It waged a fierce and pitiless war on warlocks, witches, and charmers, and all who consulted such until, in 1736, the law was repealed.

Between the passing of the Act and its repealing, thousands of innocent people were put to death. To read the Church records of that time is to catch a glimpse "of old unhappy far off times" when a cloud of gloom and suspicion overshadowed our land; when it was a capital offence to consult a "skilly" woman about an ailing bairn; when the "Lights o' Leith" were kindled, and that in

sinister fashion, if a longing woman wanted news of her sailor son, and uttered a charm for his protection.

One point is worth noticing in connection with the hold witchcraft had over our country, especially towards the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries. The old Catholic religion had been forbidden, the Reformed Faith had not been firmly established, and between the passing of the old religion and the coming of the new is always a fruitful time for witchcraft. The people, left leaderless, will turn to anyone who can help them, for mankind will always stretch out groping hands towards the unknown.

Even the meeting places, chosen by witches, had a special significance ; they were stone circles, or even solitary stones left by these mysterious people, the Druids, and having always a certain mysterious association, old kirkyards or ancient battle-fields or castles.

Mr. Brodie Innes, who knew intimately the witch lore of Scotland, always averred that the Forres witches met Macbeth at the Knock of Alves, and within the little stone circle, which is still to be seen on its southern slope.

Mr. Winchester, of the Consular Service, applied to the editor of "Social Life in Morayshire" for information as to how Doré, the artist, should paint Macbeth. Writing from Paris, Mr. Winchester says : " I directed his attention also to the

peculiarities of the stone circle, and suggested that it might be well to place the witches in it."

Isabel Goudie, the most famous witch in the North of Scotland, met the dark master in the old kirkyard of Auldearn, which had been a Druidical circle before it became a place of Christian burial, and Pitcairn, in his "Criminal Trials," points out that in almost all the confessions of Scottish witches, the initiations and gatherings took place within old churches. When we remember that the Culdees planted their churches on the sites of old Druidical places of worship, we see at once the reason for this.

Curiously enough, our most interesting witch case comes from the time when James VI. (I. of England) went to Denmark for his bride. The passage was extremely stormy, and the royal personage was spectacularly sea-sick, and very wisely concluded that this humiliating experience was the work of witches and warlocks.

It is at this time we meet such sinister names as Doctor John Fian, Agnes Sampson, and Geillie Duncan. The two latter witches belonging to Fian's Coven, after torture, confessed to having caused the storm. Satan, it appeared, hated King James (which information rather flattered Scotland's wisest fool), and the result was the execution of Fian.

"Newes from Scotland, declaring the damnable life of Doctor Fian, a notable Sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough in Januarie last, 1591 ;



which Doctor was Register to the Devill, that sundry times preached at North-Baricke Kirke to a number of notorious witches, etc." It may be noted, however, that "Agnis Sampson, which was the elder witch," at last confessed, "before the king's majestie and his counsell," "that upon the night of Allhollon Even, shee was accompanied, as well with the persons aforesaide, as also with a great many other witches, to the number of two hundred, and that all they together went to sea, each one in a riddle, or cive, and went in the same very substantially, with flaggons of wine, making merrie and drinking by the way in the same riddles, or cives, to the kirke of North-Barrick, in Lowthian, and that after they had landed, tooke handes on the lande, and daunced this reill, or short daunce, singing all with one voice :—

"Commer, goe ye before, commer, goe ye ;  
Gif ye will not goe before, commer, let me."

At which time she confessed that this "Geillis Duncane (another of those charged) did goe before them, playing this reill or daunce uppon a small trumpe, called a Jewe's trumpe, untill they entered into the kerk of North-Barrick."

Francis, Earl of Bothwell, was supposed to have been initiated into the service of the devil, and, in 1589, it is recorded that "at the which time the Earle Bothwell made his publicke repentance in the church." The Earl of Gowrie was also sus-



pected of being a warlock, and he, like Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonston, had studied the black art in Padua and Salamanca. The peculiarity of this school of wizardry was that its disciples lost their shadows. Michael Scott belonged to this school.

“O who hasna heard o’ that man o’ renown,  
The Wizard, Sir Robert o’ Gordonstoun!  
The wisest o’ warlocks, the Morayshire chiel.  
The despot o’ Duffus, the friend o’ the deil.”

That is how he was described long ago. In appearance he was not good-looking, though it was his expression rather than his features which caused uneasiness. A tall, dark man, with great gloomy eyes, a fine intellectual forehead, beard trimmed to a point, there was about his expression a certain aloofness which repelled one. His end was tragic, for the devil hunted him for two days, and though his famous ride through Elgin and on to the holy kirk of Birnie is still a local saga, it is sad to relate that the devil caught him at last, and claimed his soul.

Shakespeare is responsible for giving us the idea that witches were old and repulsive in appearance like the “weird sisters” of Forres. One unhappy lady, the daughter of Lord Fountainhall, whose husband was one of the judges in the Court of Session, is described as being “grave, composed, and deliberate in her answers.” Isabel Goudie, to whom reference has been already made, is another example. History tells us she was young

and of most attractive appearance, with flaming red hair, and strange, mysterious, dark eyes. Her case was one of the most interesting, and in the local folk lore of Morayshire, there are still many traces of this woman. She was the wife of a farmer living on a lonely farm on the edge of Lochloy, which was a dreary mere some two miles from the town of Nairn. She was of superior station to her husband, who seems to have been a dull, heavy man, and in the neighbouring ruins of the Castle of Inshoch she met with the grey-clad scholar whom contemporary records describe and term the devil. In the kirk of Aulderne, some two miles off, she was baptised by him, renouncing her Christian baptism, and the old Castle of Inshoch became their rendezvous, transformed as her imagination pictured it, or diabolical glamour caused her to see it, to a magnificent feudal hall. Here, under the guidance of her demon-lover, she learned the spells that would make a floating straw into a splendid horse, how to make the wax images so famous in all witch lore, how to use the flint arrow heads to this day called "fairy arrows" in Devon and Cornwall, and in the West Highlands; how to make the moon paste, which also is a formula current in Morocco and in Brittany to-day, and derived from ancient Thessaly. She made the acquaintance of Sir Robert Gordon, of Gordonston, the famous wizard, who had been a Privy Councillor of King Charles I.

This strange woman became dissatisfied with her

life as a witch, and gave herself up to justice. She returned to Auldearn, and in the very church where she had renounced her baptism, the Assize met to pass judgment and doom upon her. For four days the Assize lasted, and she made her famous confession. This was forwarded to the Justice Depute, whose note ran thus :—" Having read and considered the confession of Isabel Goudie within conteened as particularly, Sathan, renunciation of baptism, with divers malifices, I find that a commission may verie justlie pass her for her last tryall." Her sentence was then pronounced, "That ye be taken away to the town of Elgin to the west port thereof, betwixt three and four o'clock in the afternoon, and there that ye be strangled to death by the hand of the hangman, and thereafter your body to be burned to ashes, and ordains all your moveable goods and gear to be escheat and inbrought to His Majesty's use for the causes foresaid."

From the records of the kirk session of Spynie, under date of 26th November, 1646, we read the following :—" The brethern appointed for the tryell of Jannat Cui and Margt. Murray, suspect of witchcraft, reported they have conveyined, and the said persons had conspired conform to the ordinance, sicklyk that they had received nine or ten points of delation of magical practises against Jannat Cui, the tenor whereoff follows :—"The crimes with which she was charged were taking the strength from Helen Charles ; making John

Purves so sick he could retain no food in his stomach ; depriving a woman of speech, and other mal-practises. The said Jannat being called in, and pored on the foresaid particulars, denied them all, whereupon the brethren, finding her obdurate, committed her to prison, and to private conference and prayers, and ordained the session of the kirk to proceed in an orderly trial, and to report their diligences the next presbytery day."

The first witch burning in Scotland took place at Forres ; the last in Dornoch, in 1722. In the old records of the town of Forres is this grim entry : "To carting two loads of peats for the burning of ane witch at the Mercat cross, aichteen pence." The Dornoch witch was put to death in December, and so terribly had she been tortured before confessing, that it is said she held out her hands to the burning faggots, and said, " Welcome, death."

## MEDIUMS OF MAGIC.

### WHITE AND BLACK.

"**T**HERE are undoubtedly certain psychic phenomena which are explainable neither by ordinary human psychology nor by any human scientific laws." To our Celtic forefolk this was an accepted fact before which they bowed in reverence and wonder. True, an intrepid soul here and there tried to solve the mystery, but to the majority of the race certain facts of life were wrapped in eternal mystery, shrouded in impenetrable silence. Death and his twin brother, Sleep, were an endless source of wonder. In both cases the soul left the body; whither did it go? "A-travelling," said the Celt, "but where?" In the case of death the traveller returned not; but in the case of sleep he did. Therefore, to ensure his safe return a spell or a sleep-blessing was murmured. There was magic in the word, magic in the sleeper's name, too. For this reason, when a sleeper has to be awakened, his name must be mentioned first, so that his soul may re-enter his body, else an evil spirit may enter first and dire consequences ensue. Here is the sleep-spell of the Highlands:—

"I lie down to-night with mild Mary and her Son,  
With Michael the bright-white, and with Bride beneath her  
mantle.

I lie down with God, and may God lie down with me ;  
I shall not lie down with Brian, and Brian shall not lie down  
with me."

It is a curious mingling of pre-Christian and Christian saints' names, proving that belief in magic words and names was common to both religions.

If a child fell asleep on his side, then you must not move him ; his soul had gone a-travelling while he slept, and might not find its way back to the child's body if there was a change of position ; but if you murmured his name as you turned him then all was well ; there was magic in the name.

Ordinary travelling had its magic spell, too. Columba's song of trust, or road safeguard, used to be repeated by himself or one of his followers setting out on a dangerous journey. It begins with :—

"Alone am I on the mountain,  
O royal Sun ! prosper my path."

And ends with :—

"My Druid is Christ, the Son of God,  
The Son of Mary, the Great Abbot,  
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit . . ."

The Highland road safeguard is a simpler one, and shows, like the sleep spell, the mingling of

names :—" I am going out on Thy path, O God ! God be before me, God be behind me, God be in my footsteps. The charm which Mary (the Virgin) made for her Son, Brigit blew through her palms—knowledge of truth and no lie. As she found, may I see the likeness of what I myself am seeking."

To the Celt, fire was another great mystery. It had to be guarded jealously. The fire-spell is undoubtedly older than Christianity, though there are Columban ones too, as, for instance :—" I am smooing the fire, O God, as the Son of Mary would smoor it." But in charms of the older period, names of deities such as Goibnui and Diancecht occur. By easy transitions, as in the case of the pre-Christian Brigit, all such deities make way for Christian saints.

The power of a magic word is seen in charms for stopping blood. Here are a few examples :—

Jesus Christ born in Bethlehem-Judah.  
He was baptised in the river Jordan.  
Forthwith the water stopped.  
In like manner will your blood stop.  
In the name of the Father, the Son, and  
the Holy Spirit.

Here is another, which must be said in a loud voice, and with outstretched arms. It must be said by a man to a woman, by a woman to a man, and so alternately ; also, it must be used only once :—



The charm of God the Great :  
The free gift of Mary :  
The free gift of God :  
The free gift of every Priest and Churchman :  
The free gift of Michael the Strong :  
That would put strength in the sun.

Here is another :—

Three Maries went to Rome, the spirits of the church stiles and the spirits of the houghs or sea-cliffs (*ny Keimee as ny Cughtee*) Peter and Paul, a Mary of them said, stand ; another Mary of them said, walk ; the other Mary of them said, may this blood stop (or heal) as the blood stopped which came out of the wounds of Christ ; me to say it, and the Son of Mary to fulfil it."

There is a beautiful old legend which tells how, in the beginning, the Creator of all things, having finished His work, went forth to view it. "It is good," said He. "Good," repeated a voice. "What ! Am I not first ?" asked the Creator. "I first," echoed the bodiless voice. It is primitive man's way of saying : "In the beginning was the word, and the word was God."

Strange then to think that this so-potent a word should ever be used for anything but good. "Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter ?" the Apostle James asks. It cannot, he proves, yet with the same word we bless God and curse our enemies.

The Romans, who believed in the evil eye, spoke

also of the fascination of an evil tongue; *mala fascinare lingua* (Catullus vii. 12) *ne vati noceat mala lingua futuro* (Virgil, Bucol. Ecl. vii. 28). The Celt believed in the subtle influence of an evil tongue, even when it was at a distance. There is a Gaelic proverb which says that a witch cannot hear one speak of her on Friday, unless one named the day. Hence one said:—“*An diu Di-h-aoine, cha chluinn iad mi air muir no tir,*” “to-day is Friday; they will not hear me on sea or land.”

Of another witch, who was supposed to have a spell whereby one had to do her bidding, they will say, “She has a word”—possibly meaning some formula, some cabalistic word—which forces the person influenced to do her bidding. This witch’s word was supposed to be so great, it could produce wounding, wasting, and all sorts of nerve troubles. Even to-day we say, when our right ear tingles, “Some one is speaking ill of me.” We tacitly admit that the distant word is influencing us. If the distant word is so powerful, then, what of the word spoken directly in one’s hearing? There is a little island in the Beaully River where a woman was hanged wrongously on a tree and eaten to death by flies. She cursed her enemies in terrible and unnameable fashion, and it is held the curse was literally fulfilled.

The Brahan Seer, who was at the head of a school of wizardry, pronounced a curse on the Seaforth’s which has come true in every detail. “I see into the far future, and I read the doom of

the race of the oppressor. The long-descended line of Seaforth will, ere many generations have passed, end in extinction and in sorrow. I see a chief, the last of his house; both deaf and dumb. He will be the father of four fair sons, all of whom he will follow to the tomb. He will live careworn and die mourning, knowing that the honours of his line are to be extinguished for ever, and that no future chief of the Mackenzies shall bear rule at Brahan or Kintail. After lamenting over the last and most promising of his sons he himself shall sink into the grave, and the remnant of his possessions shall be inherited by a white coifed (or whitehooded) lassie from the East, and she is to kill her sister. And as a sign by which it may be known that these things are coming to pass, there shall be four great lairds in the days of the last deaf and dumb Seaforth—Gairloch, Chisholm, Grant, and Raasay—of whom one shall be buck-toothed; another hair-lipped, another half-witted, and the fourth a stammerer. Chiefs distinguished by these personal marks shall be the allies and neighbours of the last Seaforth, and when he looks around him and sees them he may know that his sons are doomed to death; that his broad lands shall pass away to the stranger, and that his race shall come to an end." A gruesome "word," and one which proved pitilessly correct.

Cattle were often the victims of "the word," and as lately as 1767 an old Druidical incantation was used to work evil on the poor animals. The

people realising that the trouble had an occult origin sought out an old bard (the bards were the descendants of the Druids) and got him to use some counter-spell, after which the cattle recovered, but, we are told, "the whole country believed the old man was accursed."

Not only did the "word" affect human beings and animals, it could influence inanimate objects, particularly weapons of warfare. The Breabadair Buidhe undoubtedly bespelled the weapons of Uistean Mohr so that they became quite useless, just as surely as the Lady of the Lake gave King Arthur his famous sword Escalibur, and made it potent to smite all his enemies. The sword of Balder the Beautiful, and Whitefire, the sword of Eric, forged by the Dwarf folk, are other examples of bespelled weapons.

It is chronicled of Isabel Goudie, the Aulderne witch, that she got from the Dark Master arrow heads, over which he muttered strange words. They were potent to kill, but not if running water was between them and the desired victim.

Curiously enough, doors and gates used to be objects for bespellment.

"With hurt and hate  
I charm this gate.  
He shall not sleep or soon or late."

is an old Morayshire witch's word. It is said that the little son of Hay of Lochloy tried to open a

bespelled gate, and immediately fell into a faint. In order to lift this curse the following spell has to be chanted in a low, clear voice :—

“I take the spell from off this gate—  
Nae ill shall fall o’ muckle hate,  
Till the devil speaks the world of fate,  
Hail shall he be in the devil’s name.”

The “witch’s word could influence the elements,” too, especially the sea. Cosmo Hamilton, a rebel in the days of the Commonwealth, was, along with other rebels, sentenced to slavery in the plantations. It is said a witch’s word saved him from this terrible fate. He had embarked on board a ship, and the vessel had set out from Leith when a terrific storm suddenly arose. But at home a wax image of the young man was made, water was dashed all around it, and this spell was softly chanted :—

“I hold thee safe in the devil’s name,  
Unscathed of water shalt thou remain.  
Unhurt of wind, undrowned in sea,  
Safe so long as pleaseth me.”

Whether this spell helped or not there is no denying the fact that Cosmo Hamilton was the only one saved, and that the storm was lulled as suddenly as it rose.

“I lay this wind in the devil’s name,  
I shall not rise till I please again,  
May the winds lie hushed and still,  
And rise no more without I will.”

Moon paste, perhaps the most mysterious of all magic mediums, is also one of the oldest. The making of it was known and practised in ancient Thessaly ; magicians in Morocco and in Brittany knew of it, and except for the language being different, the ideas and forms were the same as were used in Scotland so lately as the end of the seventeenth century. Water from seven wells, herbs gathered at certain phases of the moon, clay taken from a special place, and dried in the fire, and afterwards pounded into fine dust, all played their part in the making of the paste. It required, however, the magic of the full moon, and this could only be got by incantations, sung widdershins, and a most elaborate ritual. This paste could unite sundered lovers ; it could cure illness ; and if its owner so willed it, it was capable of bringing disaster upon one’s enemies ; in fact it was capable of working magic, both black and white.

It seems strange that anything so apparently innocuous as straw should have a sinister history attached to it. Yet if we hark back to the dark days of the Druids in Scotland we find this harmless corn stalk put to a queer use . . . . If the medicine man of that old time wished to drive a man insane he flung into his face a wisp of straw.

Later on, when the Druids had passed, and but



survivals of their ritual remained, here and there we find witches using straw for strange purposes. Isabel Goudie, taught by the Dark Master himself, used a windle-straw to which she would cry, "Horse and hattock in the devil's name," and immediately she would find a magnificent black charger waiting her pleasure. Even the Dark Master did not disdain to use this medium. If in his wild rides he came to a house he wished to enter he had but to whisper a word in the ear of his good steed, and lo ! it was only a straw, whirled about by the wind.

The late Dr. A. Stewart, of Nether Lochaber, has given us an account of how straw figured in a lustral rite to avert the evil eye from a dwining child. In the account of the "*Leigheas Cuairte*" five women were seen: "Two of them were standing opposite each other, and were holding a hoop vertically between them, and the hoop all round, except where they held it in the middle was wrapped in straw and burned briskly, emitting small jets of flame and a good deal of smoke. Opposite each other, on either side of the opening of the hoop, stood other two engaged in handing backwards and forwards to each other, through the centre of the hoop of fire, a child, whose age, I afterwards learned, was eighteen months. The fifth woman, who was the mother of the child, stood a little aside, earnestly looking on. They did not notice me, and I stood quietly viewing the scene until the child having been several times



passed and returned again through the fiery circle, was handed to its mother, and then the burning hoop was carried by the two women that held it to a pool of the burn into which it was thrown. The child was a weakling, constantly clamouring for food, which it ate voraciously, and yet it did not thrive . . . . the child was under the influence of the evil eye of great power; and nothing but that it should be subjected to the rite I had witnessed (called in Gaelic *Beannachd Na Chuairte*, 'The Blessing of the Round or of the Circle') could avail to counteract the evil influence . . . an old woman's evil eye had put the wasting into the child (*a chuir an t-seacadh san leanabh*), at the same time put the hunger into it (*a chuir an t-acras ann*) . . . . The child's mother and four of the neighbouring women having been duly initiated into the mysteries of the 'Beannachd Chuairte,' an iron hoop that had once encircled the rim of a big washing-tub was got hold of, and a strawrope (*siaman*) wound round it. Here and there along the windings of the *siaman* a little oil was dropped to make it burn the brighter when it should be set on fire."

When Dorothy Calder, the Forres witch, wished to help the salmon fishers of the Findhorn, she encircled the men with a knotted straw rope, and muttered all the while an old spell. "Gang out now," she said, "and ca' a shot, an' ye'll get plenty fish; but ye'll get one 'gleyed' one; dinna tak him, lay him back in a pool, he's the de'il."

Here is a strange old tale of the Armada, which comes to us from Mull. The body of a Spanish princess had been washed ashore, and had been buried without any Christian rites. Because of this the poor stranger could not lie easy in her grave, but ever wandered in the land of strangers bewailing her miserable condition.

“Worm and beetle, they are whistling  
Through my brain—through my brain ;  
Imps of darkness, they are shrieking  
Through my frame—through my frame.”

When the King of Spain knew of this he sent a ship to Mull to avenge his daughter's burial. The vessel was commanded by one Captain Forrest, a man skilful in sailing, and having the knowledge of the “black art.” He said he would sweep the whole Isle of Mull bare.

The people of Mull, in great distress, sought out the witches of Mull, the Doideagan Muileach as they were called, and gathered them all in one place. The Lord of Duart begged them to raise a wind which would sink Captain Forrest's ship. The witches asked did Captain Forrest say : “With God's help I will sweep the island.” “He did not,” replied Duart. “Good is that,” said the first witch, and set to work. A straw rope was tied to a quern stone, the rope was passed over one of the rafters of the house, and the quern stone raised as far as she could. As the stone rose,

so did the wind. But owing to the counter-spells of Captain Forrest she could not raise the quern very high, so she called her sisters to her help. They flew to her assistance. With a grasp as of death they held on to the straw rope, but they could not move the quern any higher. At last the first witch, seeing her work was likely to fail, called on a very strong man, Domhnall Dubh Laidir (Black Donald the Strong), to hold the rope. He did so, and, with muscles stretched and strained, he held fast the quern stone. But he could only hold it fast ; he could not raise it.

There was one witch, Gormal of Moy, who had not come to the gathering. They sent for her, and whenever she came she seized the rope, up flew the quern, up rose the storm, the wind was so strong it blew away the iron head off the handle of the axe with which Captain Forrest tried to cut the cable. So the brave Spanish ship went down, and Captain Forrest and his men lie buried in the bay. The old tale lives on in a song still sung in Mull :—

“Aha ! Captain Forrest, thou didst boast  
Last year to desolate Mull’s coast,  
But now, Hoo-hoo ! thy ship is lost ! ”

## SHAPE SHIFTING.

“DOL ANN AN RIOCHD.”

NO branch of witchcraft is more interesting, more ancient, more universal, or more currently believed in than the somewhat sinister one of shape shifting. Wherever witchcraft holds sway this old folk belief is met with. Briefly, it is the three-fold power exercised by a witch or warlock in a subjective way, and in an objective way. Lycanthropy, the first, is the power to turn one's self into an animal, generally a wolf (hence the name), and to change back into human form at will. Secondly, it is animal transformation, and is exercised objectively on an enemy, whereby the enemy is turned into some animal, and in that form is kept at the will of the enchanter. Thirdly, it is the passing of the soul, not necessarily voluntarily, into some animal form. Metempsychois is the technical term, and may be either subjective or objective.

The animal most favoured for shape shifting was the wolf ; in fact, our word “were-wolf” has this ancient belief enshrined in it, for in reality it means “weird-wolf.” In our own Scotland we get a glimpse of this belief in personal and place names. For instance, Cinel Loairn, from which the name

Lorne, in Argyllshire, is derived, is from the Gaelic "*loarn*," a wolf, and the clan name, Macleannan, means the "son of the wolf." This belief was old in the days of Shakespeare. In the "*Merchant of Venice*" there is a reference to the current were-wolf superstition.

"O be thou damned, inexorable dog,  
And for thy life let justice be accused.  
Thou mak'st me waver in my faith  
To hold opinions with Pythagoras.  
That souls of animals infuse themselves  
Into the trunks of men : thy currish spirit  
Govern'd a wolf, who, hanged for human slaughter,  
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet.  
And whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallowed dam,  
Infused itself in thee ; for thy desires  
Are wolfish, bloody, starv'd and ravenous."

S. R. Crockett uses a were-wolf in the "*Black Douglas*" that for sheer fearsomeness is not easily matched. The green gleam of the animal's eyes, which could be glimpsed also in the woman's, the snarl, and the foetid smell haunt us long after the book is laid aside. The wolf-woman is, of course, the familiar of the lord of the manor, himself a sinister figure, and supposed by the late Mr. Brodie Innes to be the original Blue Beard.

Mr. Brodie Innes, who was deeply versed in all matters pertaining to the occult, has used this same idea in his novel "*For the Soul of a Witch*," when Cecily Simpson transforms herself into a wolf,

and haunts the old castle of Burgie and Pluscarden Abbey.

Another animal favoured for shape shifting was the seal, and here again we can trace its influence in names. The Mac Codrums, Clan Mhic Codruim nan ron, is "the son of the seal," and old folk tales tell how seals could become human beings at night, but were seals all day. From this belief probably sprang the repugnance many of the islanders have to killing a seal. The song, "Mhairi Dhu," is really a seal song. Mhairi was "sib" to the seals, and though she was betrothed to Donal, the boatman, she flies on the eve of her wedding, and being met by a seal man she becomes a seal woman, and from them are descended the Mac Codrums of North Uist, brown-haired, brown-skinned, with curiously set ears and round bullet-shaped heads. Most of the men of North Uist have fair hair, and grey or blue eyes, and are unmistakably Scandinavian in their colouring. Fiona Macleod has in one of her mystic tales, "Dannan Ron," a hero whose name is Magnus MacCordrum, and, who is, like Mhairi Dhu, belonging to the seal folk. It is rather interesting to note that the brown hair of this clan grows almost like fur on the head, and extends far down the back of the neck. Belief in the seal form is current in Ireland, for the personal name, "Coneely," is derived from the same root as MacCodrum.

Hares, as everyone knows, are witches in disguise. The belief is widespread, and is current still in



Scandinavia. In Sweden there is a traditionary animal known as a "milk hare," which steals the milk from the cows. The Scottish wizard, Michael Scott, once turned himself into a hare, and was nearly torn to pieces by his own hounds. It is said he saved himself by creeping into a drain close to his castle at Oakwood, on the Ettrick. That notorious witch, Isabel Goudie, was also in like danger, only she recollected in time the charm which could restore her to woman form. It sounds like doggerel, but such as it is I give it :—

"Hare, hare, God send thee care,  
I am in hare's likeness just now,  
But I shall be in woman's likeness enow."

The rhyme to change a woman into a hare is :—

"When we go in shape of hare  
Say ' I sall go into the hare  
With sorrow and syck and meikle care ' ;  
And I sall go in the devil's name  
And will till I come home again."

Dr. Henderson tells us of a Sutherlandshire man who was cutting peats when a monster hare, pursued by two hounds, rushed past. Donald lifted his spade, and came down on the hare's back, severing the animal into two. To his horror as he looked he saw the supposed hare turning into the face and form of a neighbour's wife, who had an uncanny reputation. Donald fled home, but



turned to look back, when lo ! neither hare nor hounds were to be seen. When he got home he was met by his wife, who told him that their neighbour had been killed by a kick from a "sheltie." Donald said nothing, but he knew that he had seen the soul of the woman being pursued by the hounds of hell.

Robert Louis Stevenson puts into the mouth of Andrew Dale the story of 'Tod Lapraik, the weaver, who could transform himself into a solan, in which form he once attacked Andrew's father. It is one of the most dramatic folk tales of this particular school, and has a Celtic prototype in the "Yellow Weaver and the Black Beast of the Ford." In the first the solan is killed with a silver tester, in the second case a magic dirk does the killing, but both cases have this in common, that no ordinary measure would suffice.

The cat was greatly favoured by witches. There is still extant the confession of Margaret Nin-Gilbertson, of Thurso, who in 1719 confessed before Mr. William Innes, minister of Thurso, that she was bodily present in a house in the Burnside of Scrabster in the likeness of a feltered cat, that there were many other cats there, and that by their cries and hideous noises they did so disturb the owner of the house, one William Montgomerie, a mason, he set on them with an axe, a dirk, and a sword. Margaret Nin-Gilbertson was wounded in the leg, and after she was back in woman form she still limped.

Under the heading of animal transformation under a curse, or spell, we have tales which belong to the very childhood of fiction. "Beauty and the Beast" is an excellent example. Here the bespelled prince, in the disguise of a beast, is kept in bondage till a stronger spell is found, and in finding it, Beauty restores to human form her lover. It is one of the most beautiful of folk tales. Don Quixote, with his belief in wizards and enchantment, was sure the flock of sheep was really distressed damsels in disguise, and in Scotland there is the queer story of the salmon of the Findhorn, and all these come under this heading.

The Scandinavian influence upon our Celtic literature is shown in the following folk tale. King Magnus of Norway sailed from his home to Scotland. He encountered a heavy sea, and was shipwrecked, losing both crew and ship. Ragged and bare foot he was flung on the rocky shore of Scotland, and saw before him a big town. The houses were very small, and presently he saw a tiny man standing in his doorway making shoes. He told Magnus that this was the Kingdom of Little Men. After a great many adventures, in which an enchanted lady figures, Magnus is transformed into an ape. He retains his senses as a man, and has some terrible experiences. At last he is freed from his ape shape, and is changed back into that of a man, but he has only one eye. The enchanted lady was, of course, the King's daughter, who had turned herself into an eagle, and fought with her

enemy. It was in this encounter Magnus got his eye torn out. In order to console him the lady married him, "and they lived happy ever after."

In most of our Scottish tales of transformation the mare or horse form seems to have been favoured. The last witch burned in Scotland was burned in Dornoch, in 1722, for this very offence. She used to change her own daughter into a pony. She confessed to this strange crime, and on the morning of her burning, as it happened to be a very cold day, this poor, deluded woman (Euphan Leslie was her name) stood by the fire which was to be her own death and actually warmed her hands at the blaze.

Another variant of this transformation into horse form comes from Tiree, where a magic bridle was used. The lad who had been the victim of this spell managed to get possession of it, shook it over the head of its owner, a farmer's wife, when she was instantly changed into a mare. He led her to a smithy, and had the smith to shoe her. When he got her home, he took off the bridle, whereupon she resumed her human form, only she had iron shoes on hands and feet. The lad got her to promise never to transgress again, and then helped her to get the irons off. In one version she bleeds to death, in another she becomes a reformed character. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Willox family have in their possession a magic bridle, and an old man in Tomintoul, in

Banffshire, had another. These bridles had belonged to the water horse at some time.

From metempsychosis come a host of queer tales. The clown in "Twelfth Night" says to Malvolia :—

Clown—What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl ?

Mal.—That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.

Clown—What thinks't thou of his opinion ?

Mal.—I think nobly of the soul, and no ways approve his opinion.

Clown—Fare thee well. Remain thou still in darkness : thou shalt hold the opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits ; and fear to kill a woodcock lest thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam. Fare thee well !

From South Africa comes the very same belief only the dead reappear there for mischief, and to frighten the living. Widows are kept in terror by their departed husbands. They see them in the form of panthers, serpents, and wolves gliding about the house at night.

Sea-gulls are believed by some fishermen to be the souls of the drowned, and for this reason they must be left unharmed. Sometimes the dead reappear to avenge some wrong. In Gaelic folk tales the animal is very often in the form of a he-goat, which sets one wondering can this be a survival of the worship of Pan.

In a certain island in the Hebrides there was

heard night after night a voice calling for "vengeance," and the form of a goat was glimpsed. Some brave men went to explore, when they found the body of a man who had been murdered. It was his spirit in goat form that had been demanding vengeance.

In one case the soul took the form of a white roe which haunted the house which had been its home when in human form. Perhaps the strangest of all these beliefs is the one in the "Boobrie," or water horse. It is a spirit, in bondage, and is also identified with the "Bull o' the Bog." The ancientness of this belief may be seen from such place-names as Tarff, Abertarff, Tarves, and Tarvie, all Pictish words derived from "bull."

Shakespeare refers to the rat as an animal used in shape shifting. In "As You Like It," Rosalind pretends that she was once a "rat, an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember," and again in "Macbeth" one of the witches cursing the "rump-fed ronyon" says:—

"I'll thither sail, and like a rat without a tail  
I'll do, and I'll do, and I'll do."

"Without the tail" is interesting, because it was an old folk belief. For every limb and member in the human body, there is one to correspond in that of the rat except the tail. Therefore, when one sees a rat without a tail it is safe to say that this is really a witch in disguise.

Such are a few examples of this strange branch of folk belief ; they are worth recording for the light they throw upon life in the past, and for the influence they cast on the present, especially upon our names, and our speech.

## THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE HORSEMAN'S WORD.

THE late Mr. J. W. Brodie Innes, himself a man deeply versed in all matters pertaining to the occult, once admitted that there was one piece of ancient folklore which to him was quite inexplicable, namely, the rites and mysteries pertaining to the Brotherhood of the Horseman's Word. "It is alleged," he says, "that there was a traditional spell, handed down from one to another among the members of this brotherhood, whereby the wildest horse could be tamed at once; there were weird and solemn rituals of initiation and dire oaths of secrecy. . . . It is said to exist still, but the secret, if there is one, has been well kept."

From another source of information one learns that the initiation ceremony always took place in a smithy, and frequently the blacksmith acted as high priest. An eerie hour was chosen, the dark o' the moon for choice, and between the old and the new. On one occasion, whatever occult powers had been let loose, the high priest could not control them. Dismayed, he sent a messenger for another of the brotherhood more deeply initiated than he to quell the powers. Those outside the smithy testified that they heard rattling of chains, clanking



of bit and bridle, stamping of hoofs, and the queer "nickering" sound made by an excited horse (yet there was no horse there). An unseen iron shod foot smashed the smithy door into smithereens, but whatever damage was done inside was kept a secret. How the strange powers were quelled was also kept hidden from the outsiders. Hypnotism, was it? One can only speculate. The Highlander, if he will speak of it all, will say, with a shrug, "*Buidseahcd*" (witchcraft).

At "term" times the horseman who is changing his place is always curious as to his successor. One man who was leaving could not find out who was to take charge of his stables. By chance, however, he met the new horseman in the town. "Man, Jock, I'm glad it's you! Had it been anyone else I would have seen to it that he would not put a saddle on a horse this day." Jock had been initiated in the same smithy as the other, and the Brotherhood of the Horseman's Word safeguarded him.

Coachmen, a race of men fast vanishing, could tell queer tales if they chose. There was one man who used to drive passengers through rather a lonely part of the Highlands before the days of railways or motor cars. One bitterly cold day his solitary passenger proposed that when they reached a certain half-way house they should have a dram. Donal, the coachman, had been very restless and strange all during the drive, muttering to himself, and often glancing fearfully over his shoulder. When they reached the inn, the passenger entered

first, calling to Donal to follow him. This the coachman refused to do ; so a glass of whisky was carried out to him. While he was drinking it his face suddenly grew distorted with terror : his ears began to move backwards and forwards almost like those of a terrified horse, and his fingers trembled so that the glass fell out of his hand. "What is wrong, Donal ? " his passenger asked, becoming alarmed. "You have no need to be feart," Donal replied. "It is me they are after," and not another word would he utter. A curious thing about this old coachman was that he would never enter a church. He used to drive his family regularly to church, but he himself always loitered about till the service was over. He refused to give any explanation.

One of the queerest tales I ever have heard in connection with this subject was that of a dumb man who was high priest in his district at the ritual of the Horseman's Word. A week before this man was born a tinker woman had come to his mother's door begging bread. The mother turned angrily on the vagrant, and told her that if she did not take herself off quickly she would set the dogs on her. The tinker woman's black eyes flashed balefully. "You'll have a bairn, and though you'll have plenty to gie him he'll no' be able to ask for it," she cried, and turned on her heel. The child born a few days later was dumb, a queer, elfin child, with uncanny ways about him, curiously fond of all animals, especially horses. The only

sound he could ever produce was a whistle ; but it was enough to bring the most restive horse whinnying to his side, nuzzling his hand. He could, if he chose, make the horses so unmanageable that no one could do anything with them. Because of this strange power he was treated with great respect by all owners of horses, and often used to purchase and sell the animals to great advantage. When he died the horses in the hearse trembled, shivered, and finally became so restive the hearse had to be abandoned, and the body was carried by the mourners to its last resting-place. Whatever his secret, he carried it with him to the grave. The Celt always believed that a dumb man has " the sight of both worlds ; " it would almost seem, from this man's life, as if the belief were true.

A spell to cure a sprain was, strangely enough, originally intended to cure a horse. It comes to us from Scandinavia, and it is worth remembering that the Clan Macleod owe their name to that country, and are thought of as having a close connection with the horse. The spell was probably left here by the Norsemen, and adopted by the Celts, who altered it to suit themselves. To begin with, the tale was of Odin and Balder going forth to the chase. Balder's horse dislocates a fetlock. Many goddesses try to cure it, but in vain. Then Odin, the wizard, sings over it an incantation, and cures it.

" Bone to bone, blood to blood,  
Limb to limb, as though they were glued."

That is the Norse charm. The Celtic one has Christian names substituted for the heathen ones. With them it is Christ riding into Jerusalem, and sometimes it is St. Bride or St. Brigit who heals the sprained leg.

“ She put bone to bone, she put flesh to flesh,  
She put sinew to sinew, she put vein to vein.”

That is how one variant goes ; the most beautiful is the one where Christ does the healing—

“ The Lord rade, and the foal slade,  
He lighted and He righted,  
Set joint to joint, bone to bone,  
Sinew to sinew, and heal in the Holy Ghost’s name.”

By a little study of the changed names we can arrive at an approximate date of the use of this charm in Scotland. The charm was muttered while a thread spun of black wool was fastened round the injured limb. Mr. Brodie Innes was under the impression that this charm might have some connection with the Horseman’s Word.

Some have thought that the bridle of the horse was connected with the Horseman’s Word. There are innumerable tales of magic bridles which, if they were shaken over a human being, had the power to turn him into a horse. From Dornoch, from Tiree, and from Ulster come the tales of a magic bridle which was able to transform human beings into horses, and there is one Scottish family

who possesses a magic bridle with rather a strange power. It can call up and mirror in a water pail the apparition of a worker of evil. It can also make the figure of the absent one present. This bridle was said to have belonged to a water horse, Manannan's famous steed. One thing worth noting about the bridle was that it was only potent before midnight. In all three versions of this tale, the power of the bridle changed human beings into horse forms which were taken to the smithy to be shod. The smith, in all cases, realises the uncanniness of his task, and hurries the work. In one tale he surmises that they are fairy folk, but he keeps silent. In the Tíree version, the shoes are taken off the human being, but not until the victim had almost bled to death.

Did George Borrow believe in the Horseman's Word? It is quite possible that he with his passion for out-of-the-way folks and things may have learned of this spell from the gipsies. When he took his Irish cob to get shod, a certain secret understanding is at once established between himself and the gipsy smith, and about which the reader can only speculate. Why did he not address the smith in Romany? Did he detect in the wild appearance of this strange fellow, in his manner of speaking, and in his treatment of the cob, something to which he had the key? A brother in his own society? The reply comes in Romany, and so the queer conversation goes on. There is some understanding between these two,

and when it comes to the shoeing of the cob, the secret becomes a threefold one. The horse, by the time the shoe is on, is in a state of wild excitement, brought about by the rough usage, and by what Borrow calls "the loud and boisterous words" used by the smith. Rather a sinister figure is this gipsy smith, with his evident enjoyment of the horse's irritation and that terrible grin of his, in which his one remaining tooth, like a yellow fang, projects from his wry mouth.

Borrow, indignant at the treatment of his horse, fondles and caresses the animal, at which the smith pretends to be amazed. "Are ye not afraid of that beast? Arrah, it's vicious that he looks." The speech is evidently a trap into which the other man falls, for Borrow begins to boast of all he can do with the horse. Still the watching smith asks, "And what more can you do?" Borrow recounts all his accomplishments; riding, leaping, and creeping beneath the horse, passing between his hind legs. And again the smith says, "And what more can ye do?" "Nothing more," he replies rather exasperated. It is now the smith's turn. He utters a word which Borrow has never heard before, in a sharp pungent tone. "The effect upon myself was extraordinary, a strange thrill ran through me; but with regard to the cob it was terrible; the animal forthwith became like one mad, and reared and kicked with the utmost desperation."

It is evident that the smith was more deeply



initiated in the Horseman's Word than the other, for what follows is mysterious. He uttered another word which had as strange an influence on the excited beast as the first, but this time in quite a different way. The cob lost all his fury, the anger died out of his eyes, he became gentle, calm and affectionate again. What were the words this strange man used which had such different effects? The first one thrilled Borrow, the second one, "uttered in a voice sweet and plaintive," restored man and beast to normal ways. Have we here a fragment of this old ritual of the Horseman's Word? And is it the spell used by Balder the Beautiful as well as by Alexander the Great?



## WATER KELPIES.

CELTIC folk-literature abounds in references to that fabulous creature, "the water kelpie." Too often it is confused with the "water wraith." Between them there is a vast difference. Hugh Miller himself, an authority in all matters pertaining to the supernatural, says :— "No two spirits, though they are both spirits of the lake and the river, could be more different. The kelpie invariably appeared in the form of a young horse ; the water wraith is that of a very tall woman dressed in green, with a withered, meagre countenance, ever distorted by a malignant scowl."

Other writers describe the kelpie as a horse, young and handsome, willing to work for human beings, willing to carry a rider untiringly, but, of course, always claiming a victim at the end of the day. Between the folk-tales of water kelpies of the East and the West of Scotland there are two differences which are very interesting. The kelpie of the West Coast is capable of assuming human form, and is always dark in colour, either brown or black : the East Coast kelpie does not change its form, and is always of a golden or yellow colour.

Almost every loch and river was supposed to be haunted by the water kelpie. The best known

and most feared was the "Kelpie of the Conon," who haunted the River Conon in Ross-shire. The story is thus told by Hugh Miller:—"A party of Highlanders were busily engaged one day in harvest in cutting down the corn in a certain field; and just about noon, when the sun shone brightest, and they were busiest in the work, they heard a voice from the river exclaim, 'The hour, but not the man, has come.' Sure enough, on looking round, there was the kelpie standing in what they call a false ford, just forment the auld kirk. There is a deep black pool, both above and below, but in the ford there is a bonnie ripple that shows, as one might think, but little depth of water; just in the middle of that, in a place where a horse might swim, stood the kelpie. It again repeated the words, 'The hour, but not the man, has come,' and then, flashing through the water like a drake, disappeared in the lower pool. When the folks stood wondering what the creature might mean, they saw a man on horseback come spurring down the hill in hot haste, making straight for the false ford. They could then understand the kelpie's words, and four of the stoutest of the reapers sprang out to warn the rider of his danger. They told him what they had seen and heard, and urged him either to turn back and take another road or stay for an hour. But he would not listen to them, for he was unbelieving and in haste, and he would have taken the ford had not the Highlanders, determined to save him, pulled him from

his horse, and locked him in the auld kirk, whose ruins could be seen in the thick wood by the river-side. Inside the ruins was a trough, that once had held holy water.

“When the hour had gone by, the fatal hour of the kelpie, they flung the door open and cried to him that he might now go on his journey. There was no answer, though, and when they went in they found him lying stiff and cold on the floor, with his face buried in the water of the stone trough. His hour had come, and he had fallen in a fit, as it would seem, head foremost among the water of the trough, where he had been smothered. The prophecy of the kelpie had come true.”

Dr. Johnson in his “Tour of the Hebrides” has told of the water kelpie who haunted a loch in Raasay. “There was once a wild beast in it, which came and devoured a man’s daughter, upon which the man lighted a great fire and had a sow roasted on it, the smell of which attracted the monster. In the fire was put a spit. The man lay concealed behind a low wall of loose stones. The monster came, and the man, with the red-hot spit, destroyed it.”

Another water kelpie, who haunted Loch Ness, was killed by a brave Highlander, who drew his sword upon it, and in the name of the Trinity put it to death. The kelpie of the Black Glen quietly departed one morning, and has never been seen or heard of any more to this day.

The water kelpie of the West Coast, after turning

himself into a handsome young man, used to lay siege to the hearts of the fair maidens. One girl so wooed found her sweetheart asleep on a hillside, and she noticed a bunch of rushes in his hair. Immediately the truth flashed upon her and she fled in terror to her father's house. The kelpie pursued her, but she was too quick, and barred the door in his face. She could hear him, however, crying—

“ In a day and a year  
I'll come seeking my dear.”

She was warned never to go near the hillock again ; her parents found her a more eligible sweetheart, and all went well till her wedding day. When the company was leaving the church a big black horse came suddenly upon them, seized the bride, and galloped off with her. Since that time no one has ever seen the horse or the girl, though some passers-by at nightfall, catch a glimpse of a white face rising out of the water.

Here is a story which throws a better light on the water kelpie. One evening a girl sat at some distance from the shieling. Phemie had two sweethearts, Murdoch and Eachann. She favoured Murdoch, which made Eachann plan a terrible revenge. He tried to carry her off forcibly, when help came to her from the most unexpected quarter. The water kelpie came tearing along, rushed at Eachann, and crushed him to the earth. He then

approached the girl, and, kneeling down, invited her to mount upon his back, which she did. Immediately he sped off and carried Phemie to her mother's home and to safety. Next minute he was gone, but a voice was heard calling :—

“ I aided a maid in distress ;  
Then after three hundred years of bondage  
Relieve me quickly.”

He assumed man-form for ever after.

Another kelpie used to haunt the waters of the Spey. He was a light coloured horse, and used to appear in fine caparison. To a couple returning home from market he used to offer a mount. To one couple, a newly-wed one, he was heard to say as he invited them to mount :

“ And ride weel, Davie  
And by this night at ten o'clock  
Ye'll be in Pot Cravie.”

The kelpie of both the east and the west coast has this remarkable property :—If any one unthinkingly jumps on his back he finds himself as if glued to it, and only in one or two instances can he free himself. One method of “saining” oneself is to make the sign of the Cross over the animal's head.

Turning now to the folk-tales of the east coast concerning the water kelpie, the difference in colour is the most significant feature. This creature, unlike its brother of the west, is often found in woods and forests ; he is not so amiable as his

brother, for he refuses to let himself be ridden or yoked to a plough. All the stories about him make special mention of his flowing tail, his bristling mane, his flashing eye. Never once does he transform himself into human shape, or allow himself to become friendly with human beings.

Bearing all these facts in mind, is it not just possible that these so-called kelpies of the golden colour were really solitary members of the great herds of wild horses which were known to roam the hills and forests from Aberdeen to Caithness?

Sutherland of Duffus in 1545 claimed a herd of wild horses, which before that had been claimed by the Bishop of Moray. Both Sutherland and Moray claimed the herd, thus proving the animals must have roamed through both counties. In folklore, of course, the kelpie was regarded as being the devil in disguise; common sense suggests that it was a member of the herd of "wild meris, stagis, and folis." Possibly later on they were captured, and tamed. Now they have died, for the yellow dun type of horse is somewhat rare on the east coast.

There was a golden horse of Loch Lundie of whom the following story is told. "One Sunday two men went fishing in the loch, when they saw one of the most lovely golden-coloured ponies they had ever seen. One of the men determined to capture the animal. His companion tried to dissuade him, assuring him that the pony was the devil in disguise. The first man, however, after



stalking the pony, managed to seize it by the mane and to leap upon its back. In an instant the pony gave one or two snorts that shook the hills, and with fire flashing from its eyes and nostrils it galloped away, and horse and rider were never more seen.

Another yellow horse was seen in a meadow near Brora, also on the Sabbath Day. Two boys, who were breaking the Sabbath, saw the animal, and one managed to mount his back. The other boy had laid his hand on the pony's side, and found, to his horror, that his fingers had stuck. With great presence of mind, he pulled out his knife and cut off his hand. The pony, shrilly neighing, galloped away with the first boy, and was never seen again.

A story, almost identical to these two, comes from Aberdeenshire. Rose of Tullisnaught had a son who, along with a servant, went out hunting one day in the Forest of Birse. Suddenly they came upon a beautiful yellow pony in a glade of the forest. The servant assured his young master that the pony was the devil in disguise, but the young fellow laughed him to scorn, and captured and mounted the animal. The result was the same as in the foregoing tales, and the story is only worth quoting because in the "Records of the Sherifdom of Aberdeen" reference is made to a herd of wild horses which roamed the Forest of Birse in 1507.

The water kelpies—the black one of the west



and the golden one of the east—have vanished. We can only hope to see their successor in the “Bucking Broncho” of some travelling circus.

This strange old superstition is possibly a relic of the pagan practice of river worship.

## THE RELIGION OF THE HIGHLANDER.

A LITTLE people to-day, but the time was when the Celt was dominant from the rugged north coast of Scotland to the central parts of Asia Minor. They have left scanty written record of that old life, but the hills, the rivers, and the towns remain to tell us of this far-flung race. These still speak the Celtic tongue. When we speak of the Apennines or of the Magaba, when we name the Danube or the Garonne, when we mention London or Leyden, we are using names that were first coined by the tongue of the Celt. Industrious explorers have followed the wanderings of this ancient people through Switzerland, Germany, and France, and have shown that in those countries the Celtic speech still lives on the map.

Forced onward by the succeeding deluges of the Romance, the Teutonic, or the Slavonic peoples, the Celt was at last driven into the far western extremities of Europe, until to-day we have simply two remnants of the race, one represented by the Irish, the Manxman, and the Scottish Highlanders, the other by the Welsh and the inhabitants of Brittany. These still speak their own speech and retain the ethical peculiarities of their Celtic blood ; nay, more, there never was a time when the Celt

so gloried in his speech, so prized the traditions of his race, and so valued its literature, its music, and its thought. Thus it is to-day, and on every hand we hear men speak of the Celtic Renaissance.

Great in literature and great in music has been the Celt, but one wonders whether he is not at his greatest in religion. Those first two have often been dealt with; the present writer would deal with this last, and that as exemplified in the Scottish Highlander of to-day. Right up to the time of the Reformation, the Highlander was held in the grasp of ignorance and superstition. True, there had been before that lonely torch-bearers here and there, but of these, beyond place-names and faint traditions, we have no record. St. Donan, St. Ninian, and St. Maolruadh have all left their traces in the topography of the Scottish Highlands. After 1560, slowly but surely the darkness began to dispel. Here and there devout souls caught the light, and flashed it in the faces of their fellows, and by the middle of the eighteenth century began the great revival of religion which spread its blessed influence alike over the Highlands and the Lowlands. This work went on and reached its culminating point towards the close of the century (1782). But days of power were still witnessed in the following century, notably in the time of Macdonald of Ferintosh, the "Apostle of the North," the greatest revival preacher the Highlands have ever produced. From that time and onward until to-day loyal-hearted ministers have

preached and prayed and wrought, and men and women have been won to the Cross and built up in the faith and likeness of Jesus Christ.

But now one asks of the characteristics which mark the religion of the Highlander. What are the mood and the spirit of the man? That the Gospel of the Cross should beget more than one type of Christian man or woman may seem a strange thing. Than that it does, nothing is more certain. It only needs to be pointed out in proof of this how the Highlander has looked askance at the Southron in the matter of his religion, the Southron at the Highlander, both, needless to say, more or less unjustly. How this should come to pass, a little thought is sufficient to discover. One has but to mark the content of the religious experience of each, and if the elements be the same, yet there is in certain cases a decided difference in the extent. From this point of view, one of the first things which will strike the observer, in the case of the Highlander, is his deep and sharp sense of sin ; its power, in the grasp of which he is utterly impotent ; its guilt, which lies upon his heart as a burden unutterable. A true kindred soul he is with St. Paul in this respect. He will turn to that powerful passage in the seventh chapter of the letter of the Apostle to the Romans. He will read : " For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." He will keep pace with the apostle right through the passage, in every step of his experience he will

take it to describe his own, and he will share in the apostle's shout of triumph when he lets his eyes rest upon the Cross, and feels the thrills of the almighty delivering grasp of the Christ. Or perhaps he will turn to an even more grim passage of Scripture than this. It may be that he will refer you to the Gospels, and startle you by finding himself in the Gadarene demoniac. Devil-possessed the man is, even by legions of devils. They have mastered the poor human soul utterly, so that they compel him to take sides with them; to speak their speech against himself: "Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God, I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not." Yes, such a case is his, and he will dwell upon its every detail enthralled, so desperate, so terrible beyond speech. And to think that the Christ is not turned away by these forbidding words; that He deals with the man according to his need, in spite of his uttered prayer. Ah! that is to him a Gospel of infinite grace and power. He sees the God nature flash forth. He feels the devil power within him swoon in that Presence, and he is assured that the Christ is mighty to save to the uttermost.

For one thing, it has to be remembered that the man dwells remote from the throng and bustle of the city. His is a solitary life, be he a fisherman or crofter. If he be the latter, in the round of his daily tasks he is much by himself, whether he is sowing his fields, gathering his harvests, or following his sheep on the hillside. His labour being

mechanical to a very large extent, he has much time for thought. If he be the former, then he has his lone hours in the night upon the sea, with the great heavens and its stars overhead, and he is drawn to thought by the most delightful spell. Then the storm awakes. It looks as if he might never make his port, and things which are not seen stand out with force and power that leave an impression upon the soul that ever abides.

Cast by nature in a brooding, meditative mould, the environment and circumstances in the midst of which his life is set, draw forth this natural bias, and the man, whether religious or no, must brood and think and meditate.

In addition to this remoteness from the crowd and rush of the city which makes the Celt so intense a thinker, it is to be noted that he is a man of but few books, even in these days when there is no end to the making of books. Of these, one stands out supremely. It is as if written for him and for no other. Over its words he dwells, and into its mystic depths he peers. The eye of his spirit, made quick by the touch of the Spirit of God, catches its deep meanings, and this light he swings over the depths of his heart-life in all its thoughts, affections, and desires. There, one may assert, the Scottish Highlander gets his sense of sin so deep and so poignant.

From this attitude of the Celt one is led in the most natural way to consider his mysticism; for, in this attitude of his mind, he reveals himself

a mystic of the deepest dye. Being a Celt, he could scarce be anything else. Set among his mountains, with their mists and storm and tempests, or by a rock-bound coast with its wild, uneasy sea, such majesties and grandeur of Nature give the spirit of him a brooding bent, and build it up in strength. In them he feels :—

“ A presence that disturbs him with the joy  
Of elevated thought ; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And round the ocean and the living air  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.”















